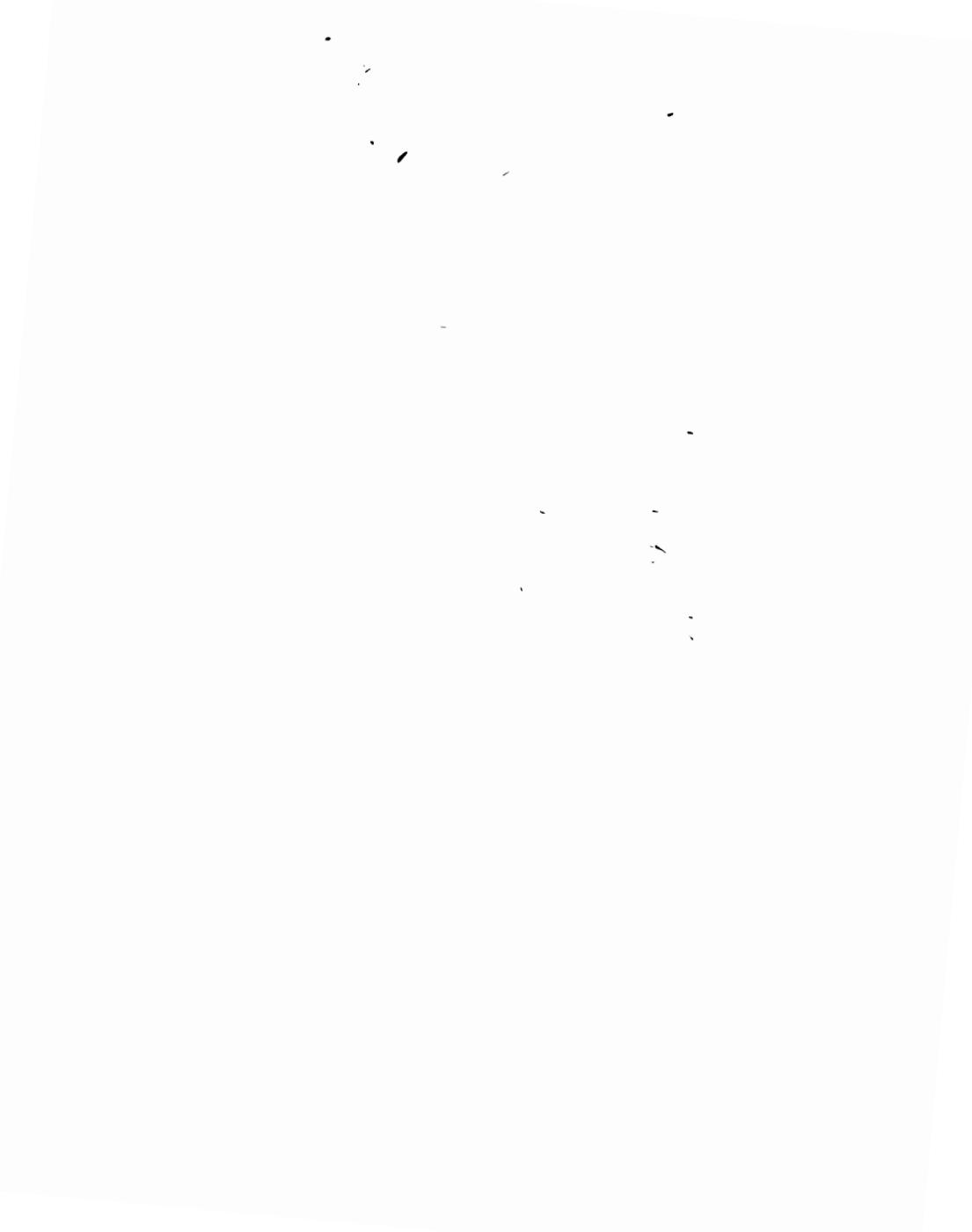


THE
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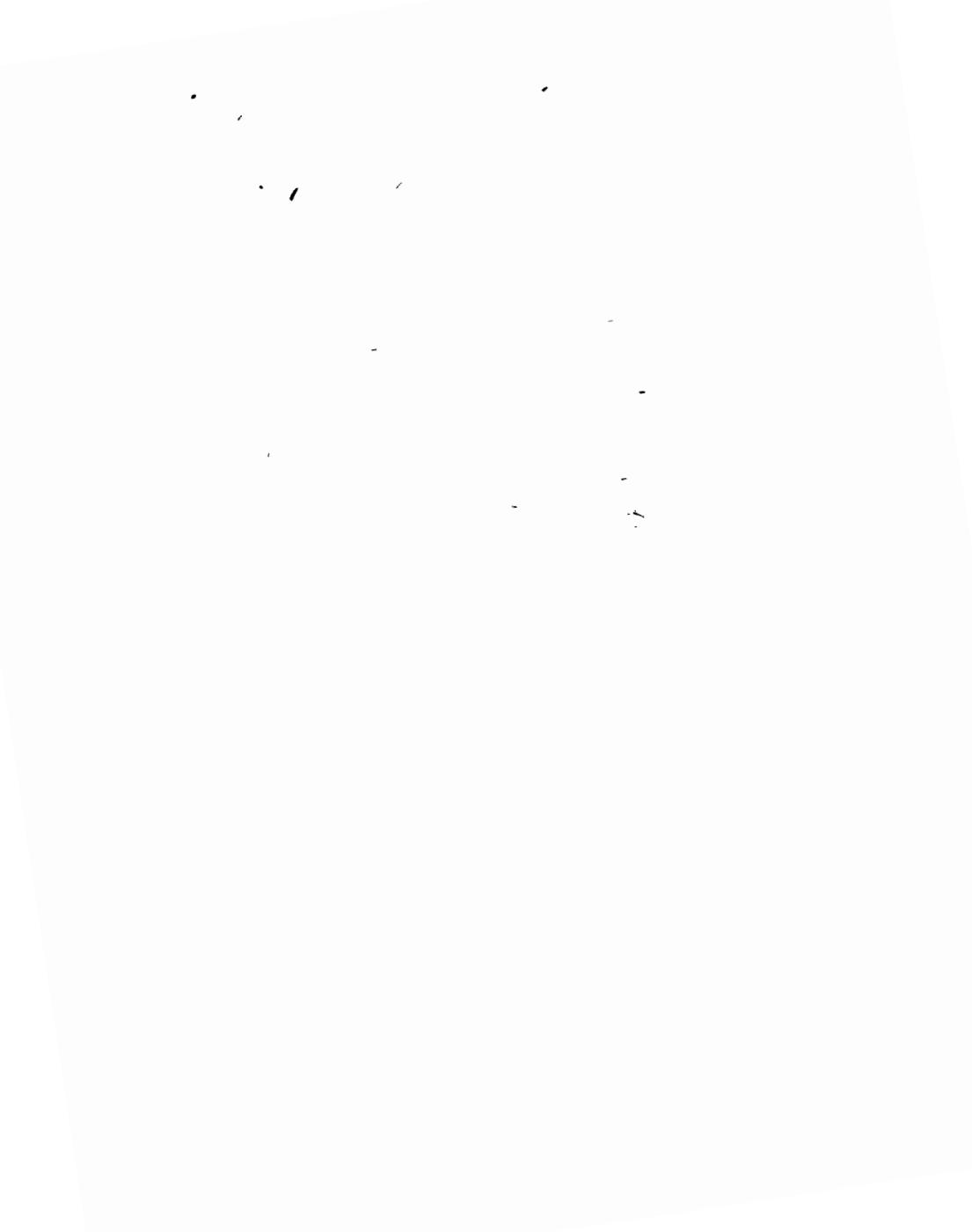
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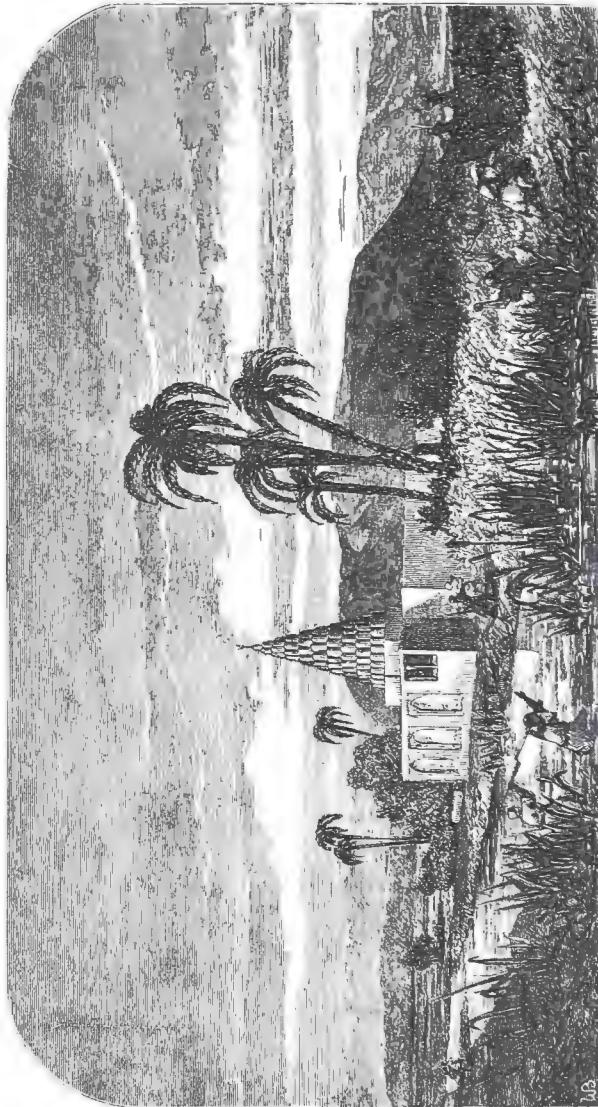
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P R E F A C E.

IT falls to me as a kind of right to pen this preface. The Hebrew Club, whose work appears in this volume, first met in my study, and began its work somewhat at my suggestion. What is said as to the *personnel* of the Club may satisfy the curiosity of the reader, as well as encourage other ministers similarly situated to combine for the more thorough study of the Book of books.

Nine years ago we began to meet once a week to read the Old Testament Scriptures in their original tongue. There is something about this grand old language which attracts the lover of sacred things, a heavenly rhythm which fills and inspires his soul, and enables him to say, "I love thy law." There is a divine sweetness in the very words in which that law was written. After two years of such pleasurable work we commenced to publish in one of our city newspapers the results of our study, in the shape of a weekly exposition of the International Series of Sunday-school Lessons. These expositions, furnished by members of the Club in turn, continued two and one half years, being generally read in this city, and extensively copied into the newspapers of other cities.

Five years ago, having formed the plan of concentrating our work upon the Book of Esther, we discontinued as a Club the

exposition of the Sunday-school lesson. But a taste in the community had been created for it, so that two of our weekly newspapers from that time began to give scholarly and interesting elucidations of the lessons,—one by a member of this Club (Rev. John W. Haley), the other by a clergyman of the city, not connected with the Club. With regard to the membership of the Club, it should be said that four parish ministers have done the work. Professor G. Frederick Wright and Dr. Selah Merrill met with us a few times. The former contributed some valuable matter which will appear in the volume of Discourses on the Book of Esther, soon to be published; the latter furnished some matter which will be found in Excursus D (p. 122) in this volume. We have received suggestions on difficult points from some of the best Hebrew scholars in Great Britain and Germany, as well as in our own country. Among them are Dr. James G. Murphy, of Belfast, Ireland; Professor Geo. C. M. Douglas, D.D., of Glasgow, Scotland; Dr. James Strong, of Madison, N.J.; Professor Willis J. Beecher, of Auburn, N.Y.; Professor A. Meyrowitz, New York City; Rev. Wm. H. Cobb, Uxbridge, Mass.; Rev. T. W. Chambers, D.D., New York City; Rev. E. S. Dwight, D.D., Hadley, Mass.

It is our purpose, if the Lord spares our lives and gives us the needed strength, to do for the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah what we have done for the Book of Esther. We have the work under way for the former named book.

The text as it appears in this volume is in no sense the revision of another translation, but a rendering of the Hebrew *de novo*. We are joint authors of the translation. As to the other material, Rev. Owen Street. D.D., contributed the Intro-

duction, the notes on chapters v., vi., and vii., and **Excursuses A, E, F.** He has been for twenty-seven consecutive years the successful pastor of a large and influential church in this busy city, and has been a centre of light and intelligence here. He has contributed not a few articles to the press of the day.

Rev. John W. Haley, M.A., recently the pastor of a Congregational church in this vicinity, and now a resident of Amherst, Mass., for some time a Professor in one of our Western Colleges, is the author of two well-known books,—“Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible,” and “Supplicium Aeternum, or the Hereafter of Sin.” He was made the editor of this volume because of his known ability in such work. He contributed the notes on chapters iii. and iv., **Excursuses G, H, I, J, K, and the Indexes.**

Rev. William P. Alcott contributed the notes on chapters i. and ii., and **Excursuses B, C, D, P.** He has been for many years a Congregational pastor, and has been accustomed to make scientific studies his relaxation. During the year 1877 he was the travelling companion of Dr. Philip Schaff in his tour through Egypt, the Sinaitic region, Palestine, and Southern Europe. He has contributed many articles to the press, and edited the Natural History department of Schaff’s Bible Dictionary.

The writer of this preface has been for fourteen years the pastor of a Congregational church in this city. His contributions to this volume are the notes on chapters viii., ix., and x., and **Excursuses L, M, N, O.**

We have found great pleasure and profit in our work. All

careful study of the word of God fits one better to be a herald of the gospel of eternal life. We have discovered rich treasures in this too much neglected portion of the sacred word.

That the Lord may own and bless our labors to the upbuilding of the church, to a truer understanding of the oracles of God, to the honor of his name, and to the saving of souls, is the fervent prayer of myself and all my associates in this work.

JOHN M. GREENE.

LOWELL, MASS., November 1884.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Introduction,	7-27
Translation and Notes,	29-91
EXCURSUSES,	92-186
A. Persian Words and Names,	92-94
B. Topography and Buildings,	95-109
C. Pavement and Components,	110-116
D. Letters and Posts of the Ancients,	117-122
E. Early Modes of Execution,	122-130
F. The Jews in Exile,	130-139
G. Signet Rings and Seals,	140-146
H. The Massacre,	146-149
I. Fasting,	149-151
J. The Golden Sceptre,	151-153
K. Fate of Royal Favorites,	153-154
L. Couriers,	155
M. Coursers,	156
N. Tribute,	156-160
O. The Unwritten Name,	161-169
P. The Septuagint Esther,	170-186
Hebrew Index,	187, 188
English Index,	189-194

MAPS AND PLANS.

1. Plan of Persepolis (with explanations), *at the end.*
 2. Modern Susiana, "
 3. Plan of Mounds of Susa, "
 4. Persian Empire — Ancient, "
-

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
Tomb of the Prophet Daniel,	<i>to face title.</i>
The Golden Sceptre,	60
Diagram to illustrate the King's Gate and the Courts,	107
Modes of Execution — Impalement,	127
Signet-Rings and Seals,	142

INTRODUCTION.

I. THE BOOK OF ESTHER,—ITS CLAIM TO A PLACE AMONG THE SACRED WRITINGS.

THIS book comes to us with an external record that is above suspicion. We receive it from those most vigilant and scrupulous guardians of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish people; and with the most assuring commendation on their part. Their learned rabbis are united in giving it not only a place, but a very high place, among their sacred writings,—so high that they included it among those scriptures that they distinguished as the *Hagiographa* (the emphatically sacred books). And, even among these, they assigned it the first rank, reckoning it with those which they call by way of special emphasis מְגִילָה (*Megilloth*).¹ It is sometimes called by a kind of supreme emphasis הַמְגִילָה (*ha-Megillah*), the “book of books.” It may be added as a further illustration of the high repute in which it was held by the Jews, that it was a saying of Maimonides, that “in the days of the Messiah, the prophetic and hagiographical books will pass away, except the book of Esther, which will remain, with the Pentateuch.”

This book is read through by the Jews every year in their feast of Purim in the synagogues, and is indeed necessarily associated with that observance. The one is to the other what the Book of Exodus is to the Passover. It is more. For we could make out from the Book of Psalms, and other scriptures, on what basis of fact the Passover rests; but there is no other scripture, if the Book of Esther be supposed to be stricken out, from which we could explain the observance of Purim.

¹ As we should give it in modern phrase, “books that *are* books.”

The proof of the unquestioned and high standing of this book in the Jewish canon of Scriptures is complete. It is so recognized by the Jewish writers from Josephus down to our own times. This consideration is all the more weighty from the fact that the Jewish scribes have kept the Hebrew text wholly unadulterated by admixtures from the extensive additions that have been prefixed, suffixed, and interpolated by the writers of the Septuagint. "Unto them [the Hebrew people] were committed the oracles of God."¹ No one contends that the Book of Esther was missing from that canon of the Jewish Scriptures to which our Lord and his apostles continually made their appeal. This fact vindicates for it a place in the word of God as held and published to the world by the early followers of Christ.

The internal evidence is equally satisfactory. Like the other books of the Hebrew canon, it deals with the fortunes of the Jewish people, and is fully in keeping with their well-known characteristics. Mordecai and Esther were Jews of the clearest and most unquestionable type. The providence of God, in the deliverance of his people, stands out in this book in as distinct outline as in their rescue from the Egyptian bondage or from the Babylonian captivity. The record is everywhere true, moreover, to the Medo-Persian dynasty and character. It shows us just what the profane histories show us, only with greater minuteness and fidelity.

It will be seen that we have found no occasion to enter upon the discussion of the question whether the book may not be poetic, or poetico-didactic, and hence fitted to be ranked as an allegory, or a parable to illustrate some important truth in morals or in providence. The absence of rhythm and parallelism, and the whole tone and manner of the book, as well as the strong testimony to its historic character, forbid that we should seriously consider such an hypothesis. We can only wonder that the hypothesis has been saved from the unnoticed death that besets a monstrosity in sacred criticism, by its association with such names as Semler, Oeder, Corrodi, Hitzig, and Zunz.

To us, the book is a veritable history. The glimpses which it gives us of the arbitrary character of the despotism under

¹ Rom. iii. 2.

which Mordecai and Esther lived ; the extent of the royal harem ; the nature of the recorded festivities ; the approaches, the architecture, and the furnishing of the palace ; and the sudden elevation and downfall of those in high position, are historic verities. Its Orientalisms are all true to ancient history ; and its record of Xerxes corresponds exactly with all that we know from other sources as to his character.

The promotion of Esther and Mordecai from a nation of captives is closely parallel to that of Joseph in Egypt, and that of Daniel and his companions in Babylon. The practical teaching of the book, taken as a whole, is similar to that of the Scriptures generally : it is that of dependence on God for deliverance from destruction ; his care and timely interposition for his people ; and the certain downfall of the wicked. The common objections that there is no suggestion of prayer in the book, and that the name of God does not occur in it, are fully answered in the **Excursus on The Unwritten Name.**¹

II. CHRONOLOGICAL DATA DERIVED FROM EXISTING MONUMENTS AND PROFANE HISTORY.

The date of the leading events of the narrative, or the precise period covered by it, has not been declared by any author of ancient times. Scholars have had before them in the book of Esther very much such a study as if the statements it contains had been dug up from the same chambers as the records that have been published of the military exploits of Sennacherib or of Nebuchadnezzar ; or found chiselled on some rocky tablet similar to that of Behistun or the famous Moabite stone. The questions at once arise, Where did these events come in ? What fixed points in history did they precede or follow ? Does history know anything of this monarch, or the characters associated with him in this book ? These were hard points for even such giants of historical learning as **Archbishop Usher, Dean Prideaux, and Joseph Scaliger.** After all their sturdy wrestling with the problem they came each to a different result. Usher concluded that Ahasuerus could be no other than Darius

¹ See Appendix, **Excursus O.**

Hystaspis; Prideaux fixed upon Artaxerxes Longimanus ; while Scaliger decided that he must have been identical with Xerxes.

We should have had much the same battle to fight with inconclusive data, but for the aid derived within the present century from the happily achieved mastery of the cuneiform alphabet of the ancient Persians. It has now been satisfactorily shown that the cuneiform orthography of the name which the Greeks shortened into Xerxes answers to the Hebrew name Achashverosh as found in the Book of Esther.

As we wish to present the proof of this to the eye we insert, in our first *Excursus*,¹ a carefully prepared schedule, differing but little from that given by Canon Rawlinson, in which those letters of the ancient Persian and Hebrew alphabets which are found to be equivalents, or nearly such, are placed side by side. It will be seen that the Persian had nothing answering to the Hebrew *Lamedh*, *Tsadhe*, *Ayin*, or *Qoph*. But the Persians had, on the other hand, a number of letters for which the Hebrews had no equivalent ; their alphabet amounting to forty letters. We give in the fourth column of our schedule, in English, Greek, Hebrew, and Persian, the three names that must be considered in our present discussion. Such a comparison as any one can make in a few moments will show that the argument from the names is conclusive for Xerxes.

It will be seen that in the second name (Khshyarsha) the combination *Khsh* represents only two letters ; the potent element of the first being *k* and of the second *s*, making the combination simply equivalent to *ks* ; which, as every Greek scholar knows, becomes in the inflections of that language uniformly *ξ*, in English *x*. Hence we find that the Greeks only obeyed the laws of their own language in representing *Khsh* by *X* in Xerxes. They represented the same two letters again by *x* in Artaxerxes. The *yar* became, under their manipulation, simply *er*. How the remaining letters of the name came to be represented by *xes* is not so apparent ; but it presents no greater difficulty than the transformation of the Hebrew שְׁמֹרֶן (*Shomeron*) into the Greek Σαμάρεια (Samaria), and other not less striking examples in the Septuagint Scriptures.

¹ See Appendix, *Excursus A.*

In comparing Khshyarsha with the Hebrew Ahashverosh, we shall see that the transliteration is much closer. The **א** (*Aleph*)¹ in the Hebrew is simply prosthetic, and designed to aid the pronunciation. The **וּ** is an exact reproduction of the Persian *ksh*, the vowel point being a comparatively modern addition.

The **וֹ** (*vav*) is in Hebrew words so frequently interchanged with **ׁ** (*yod*), that we need feel no surprise at the substitution of the former for the latter here. It is by this substitution that the *v* in the Hebrew name as spelled in English replaces the *y* in the Persian. The *rsh* of the one is precisely *rsh* in the other. Of the last vowel in either case we need make no account, as the Hebrews were not careful in giving the Persian vowels. The Hebrew scholar will perceive that the identity of the name as exhibited in the two languages is complete. Neither of the other names (Daryvush or *Artkhshtra*) can be made to yield Ahashverosh.

But we are still met by the difficulty that we have this same name, Ahashverosh, in Ezra iv. 6, apparently applied to Cambyses. This difficulty, however, counts for nothing, when we call to mind that it was no unusual thing for Persian kings to have two names; and it is still more effectually disposed of by the consideration that the reign of Cambyses is so far from meeting the historical requirements of the case that no one has thought of finding in him the Ahashverosh of the Book of Esther.

This brings us back to Xerxes. There are eighteen instances of the occurrence of his name in the inscriptions that have been copied from Hamadan, Persepolis, and Van. It was one of the three names upon which Grotfend began his great deciphering experiment, in which, as he afterward found, he was “building better than he knew.”

Four of the inscriptions are very nearly identical. The following passage occurs in each of the four: “I am Xerxes [Khshyarsha] the king, the great king, the king of kings, the king of the many peopled countries, the supporter of this great world, the son of Darius the Achaemenian.” This settles the point that Khshyarsha was the son of Darius the Achaemenian.

¹ See any Hebrew Lexicon, under **א**.

An inscription by Artaxerxes (Ochus), several generations later, contains this passage: "I am the son of King Artaxerxes, Artaxerxes [being] the son of King Darius; Darius [being] the son of King Artaxerxes; Artaxerxes [being] the son of King *Khshyarsha*; *Khshyarsha* being the son of King Darius; Darius being the son of one named Hystaspes; and Hystaspes being the son of one named Arsames an Achaemenian." This, being prefaced with the declaration, "Says Artaxerxes, the great king, the king of kings," etc., gives us the following well-known order of kings: Artaxerxes (Ochus), Artaxerxes (Mnemon), Darius (Nothus), Artaxerxes, Xerxes, Darius Hystaspis. Hence there is no escape from the conclusion that *Khshyarsha* is Xerxes.¹

There is another process — that of "eliminating impossible kings," as Rawlinson has happily phrased it — that brings us to the same result. We begin with throwing out of the account all who preceded Darius Hystaspis, as we are required to do by the very first verse of the book.

We must have a sovereign who reigned from India to Ethiopia. Darius Hystaspis was the first who carried the Persian power into India.

¹ Mr. Tyrwhitt in his elaborate endeavor to show that Ahasuerus is Darius Hystaspis, and Esther identical with Atossa, admits that "the name Hadassah or Atossa is applied by certain Greek writers, not only to princesses descended from Darius and his queen Atossa, but to persons of earlier Persian, and even of the Assyrian annals. We have the 'Atossa, daughter of Ariaspes,' mentioned by Hellanicus; and in the pedigree of Cappadocian kings given by Diodorus we have an 'Atossa, wife of Pharnaces,' who appears to have been father's sister to the great Cyrus; also Herodotus's Atossa, daughter of Cyrus, who married Cambyses, and devolved as part of his goods and chattels to his successor, the pretended Smerdis" (note p. 183). Atossa, the wife of Darius, and mother of Xerxes, was daughter of Cyrus. And Herodotus says Xerxes was son of a king and a queen, and not as was his competitor, son of a man who became afterwards king, and of a woman who became afterwards queen. How then could Atossa be Esther? Tyrwhitt is compelled to make "daughter of Cyrus" a mere title, signifying nothing whatever as to her paternity. He admits also (p. 4) "that the authority of the Septuagint (if in such a matter it be of any importance), may be cited for identifying the two names Xerxes and Ahasuerus; since in the original Greek version of the book of Daniel, the name Xerxes is put for the name Ahasuerus at the beginning of the ninth chapter." "This," he adds, "the reader may see in Tischendorf's Septuagint, which contains the older Greek version, as well as in Theodotion's Daniel, its substitute, in what we may call the received or vulgate version of the Jewish Scriptures."

We must have a king who held his court at Shushan, or Susa. This was true of no one before Darius Hystaspis.

We must have one who was at leisure during the third year of his reign for months of feasting, and who had his great captains and military chiefs, representing the strength of the whole Medo-Persian army at leisure to join with him in the feast. This cuts off Darius Hystaspis. For he was not at Susa, but at Babylon ; and his military forces, during this part of his reign, were having serious work in hand, and his throne was too insecure to admit of these six months' revels with his generals and captains. The following brief calendar of the first years of his reign, made up from the inscriptions as compared with the existing histories, and accepted as the most probable order of events by those who have specially devoted themselves to the study, will show something of the strength of this argument. Darius came to the throne B.C. 521. Between this date and December B.C. 520 he sent an army against Atrines, who had declared himself king, and whom he overcame and slew. At the latter date (B.C. 520) he gained a second battle, on his march toward Babylon, at Zazana on the Euphrates. From January B.C. 519 to September B.C. 518 he was occupied with the siege of Babylon ; obtaining possession of the city at the latter date, and putting to death the rebel king Nidintabelus. Before Darius was ready to leave Babylon, another aspirant for the kingly power arose, and was recognized as king throughout all Media. Armenia and Assyria were also drawn into the rebellion. Two armies were sent to meet this new peril. It was a most formidable revolt, and was not fully quelled until Darius himself appeared in Media, in the summer of B.C. 518. This carries us beyond the third year of Darius, and leaves him still two or three years of hard campaigning before the revolts were all quelled and the dangers that threatened his kingdom were overcome.

We thus add, to the decisive argument from the name, the clear proof of an alibi for the king, and show that both he and his generals were otherwise employed, with the stern necessity of revolution and war upon them, and of course could not have been feasting at Susa, or Shushan. There can no longer be any question as regards Darius.

Leaving the first of the three kings that have been suggested, let us try the third, Artaxerxes Longimanus. As in the case of Darius, the name is against the supposition. Both the Persian original and the Hebrew transliteration of it are in fatal disagreement with the name which is given in the Book of Esther. The character of this prince looks equally the other way. As given by the profane historians, he appears “remarkable among the Persian monarchs for wisdom and right feeling.”¹ And with this agrees the view we obtain of him in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The learned are by no means agreed as to what kings are intended in Ez. iv. 6, 7, 23 by Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes; some insisting that they can be no other than Xerxes and Artaxerxes Longimanus, and others assuming that the one must be Cambyses and the other the pseudo Smerdis. Whichever conclusion be followed, it will not affect the argument that identifies Achashverosh with Xerxes in the Book of Esther. Neither does it raise any question as to who is intended by Artaxerxes in the seventh chapter of Ezra and in the second chapter of Nehemiah. In the seventh chapter of the former, containing “a copy of the letter which king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest,” we have, beyond a question, the Artaxerxes who succeeded Xerxes, i.e. Artaxerxes Longimanus. It was in his seventh year (Ez. vii. 7) that the letter was given. And in this letter we find a spirit of kindness and respect manifested for Ezra and his people, and a spirit of reverence for Jehovah, that we can by no means attribute to Ahasuerus.

We find in him the same temper and the same spirit thirteen years later, when Nehemiah asks for leave of absence from the palace, and for letters of credit and authority, that he may the better rally his countrymen and secure the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

Certainly, this could not be the monarch to whom Haman ventured to talk about the Jews as though he were wholly ignorant of them; speaking of them as a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed in all the provinces of the kingdom, with laws diverse from all people. Still less could he assume

¹ Bishop Cotton. See also Diod. xi. 71.

that this sovereign would take his word as decisive that it was “not for the king’s profit to tolerate them,” and sanction, without inquiry, the decree for their destruction. We are evidently looking at the wrong man. The story does not agree with his character any more than the name with his name. Thus we are brought back again, by the demands of the history, to Xerxes. He is chronologically between the other two, which disposes of the whole question of date. If the dates assigned to them are severally admissible, his must certainly pass unchallenged. The name is demonstrably one and the same, and the character befits the history at every point — unreasonable, imperious, tyrannical, reckless of human life, impious, capricious, and cruel. The story of his scourging the Hellespont, as told by Herodotus, shows us the man, and prepares us for all that is told of him in the Book of Esther.¹ Such a man, we should say at once, was only true to himself in issuing a decree of wholesale slaughter at a word from his favorite minister, and then, in another turn of his capricious will, condemning that same favorite minister to instant death.

Having found this striking agreement of name, of epoch, and of character, it is not a little remarkable that we should find the sacred and profane histories assigning the same time and place for the gathering of the military counsellors of Xerxes. It is true the records look different ways; one

¹ “When Xerxes heard of what had happened (the destruction of his bridge by a tempest), he was so enraged that he ordered three hundred lashes to be inflicted on the Hellespont, and a pair of scalders to be thrown into the sea. I have been informed that he sent some executioners to brand the Hellespont with marks of ignominy; but it is certain that he ordered those who inflicted the lashes to use these barbarous and mad expressions: ‘Thou ungracious water, thy master condemns thee to this punishment for having injured him without provocation. Xerxes, the king, will pass over thee whether thou consentest or not,’ etc. After thus treating the sea, the king commanded those who presided over the construction of the bridge to be beheaded. These commands were executed by those on whom that unpleasant office was conferred.” — Herod. Beloe’s translation, p. 332. Keil points to the similarity in the character of the Achashverosh of this book to that of Xerxes, “a barbarous, whimsical, debauched despot, inclined also to adopt senseless measures.” So Scaliger, Drusius, Pfeiffer, Carpzov, Justi, Eiehhorn, Jahn, Gesenius, Herzfeld, Fuerst, and, as Keil remarks, “almost all recent authors.” Davidson says (Introd. to Old Test. ii. 157): “The conduct of Xerxes was capricious, and in some cases like that of a madman. His disposition was sensual and cruel. He was prone to indulge in riotous living. His measures were often sudden and arbitrary.”

toward the great Grecian campaign, the other toward an important crisis in the Jewish history. But this only makes their agreement the more striking. Herodotus was a Greek ; and, with his eye on Thermopylae and Salamis, he would very naturally confine his record to the deliberations which contemplated the conquest of Greece. He saw nothing of importance in the gathering at Susa but what had a bearing on this.

The Jewish historian, on the other hand, cared very little for these strifes between the uncircumcised heathen nations, and still less for the discussions that prepared the way for them. He saw the splendor of the feast, and traced the line of incidents that led on to the crisis that was prepared for his own people. For them he saw a Thermopylae wide as the empire ; and all else dwindled to insignificance in the comparison.

Each account differs from the other precisely as we should anticipate. It is enough that the time, the place, and the assembly are the same. Still another coincidence we have : the one account leaps over a chasm of four years, as it should, inasmuch as Xerxes is absent from Shushan, and is too much occupied with his Grecian war to meddle in the current of Jewish affairs ; and the other fills up that period, as it should, with the exciting incidents of the campaign.

But at the end of the four years the two histories meet again at Susa, or Shushan, and show us Xerxes occupying himself with his harem. The one writer is brought to this point by the legitimate course of history, or because the tide of events brings him there ; and the other is brought to the same point because he finds there the next link in the chain which his purpose requires him to exhibit. In either case it is perfectly natural ; the coincidence was unknown to the authors, and of course undesigned ; and it falls into line with the strong proof already adduced that the Achashverosh of Esther is no other than the Khshyarsha of the inscriptions and the Xerxes of the Greek historians. We regard this as so thoroughly settled that we do not hesitate to present the name throughout this work in that very form in which it is best known to history. We do no more violence to the Hebrew when we say Xerxes

instead of Achashverosh, than our received translation does in another case, when it says Isaiah instead of Yeshayahoo, or Abijah instead of Aveeyyahoo.

III. THE CHRONOLOGICAL DATA FROM HEBREW SOURCES.

The relations of the Medo-Persian empire to the Jewish people began soon after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, or not far from B.C. 536. He found the Jews under the bondage of the Babylonian captivity, and proclaimed their deliverance. We cannot be too often reminded of the sublime miracle of prophecy¹ antedating the event at least a century and a half, calling Cyrus by name, and declaring specifically what he would do. Josephus tells us that Cyrus was made acquainted with this divine oracle and "wondered at it; and a certain zeal and ambition seized him to accomplish the things that had been written." It is not unreasonable to regard this as the very method by which "Jehovah stirred the spirit of Cyrus"² to issue the edict by which he conferred upon the Jewish people the largest liberty of return, and generous subsidies to aid them in the rebuilding of their capital and temple. But this left them an equal liberty to remain where they were. And very many had established themselves in situations and employments which made it for their interest to remain.

It can scarcely be doubted that at the time of the events recorded in the Book of Esther, there were many more Jews outside of the bounds of Palestine than within those bounds. For their combined number nothing better than a reasonable conjecture can be offered. Such a conjecture, from which there has been no marked dissent, makes them approximate a total of three millions.

The chronological data on the Hebrew side may be presented thus. Mordecai was old enough to act as the guardian of Esther in her orphanage; and the aspect of the record is that of a guardianship assumed in her early childhood. She seems to have obeyed him as a father. We may assume, then, that when Esther was twenty years of age he was not less than

¹ See Isa. xliv. 28; xlvi. 1-7.

² Ezra i. 1.

forty. Xerxes came to the throne B.C. 485. Esther became his queen seven years later, B.C. 478, when she was presumably twenty and Mordecai forty. This will give us

Mordecai's birth	B.C. 518.
The birth of his father Jair, adding 33 years,	B.C. 551.
The birth of his grandfather Shimei,	B.C. 584.
The birth of his great-grandfather Kish,	B.C. 617.

The last mentioned (Kish) is said to have been carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar B.C. 598. This would make him nineteen years old at that time. All these suppositions are such as are ordinarily made in dealing with historic problems. No one of them is overstrained or excessive. All are within the bounds of an easy probability. Let us see now how the case would stand with Esther. Mordecai assumed the care of her as the daughter of his uncle, his father's brother. Or, in other words, his father (Jair) was the brother of her father (Abihail), and Shimei was the father of both. From that point backward, of course, the ancestry was one and the same. It is an entirely easy and natural supposition that Jair was twenty years old when his brother Abihail was born. Esther might then be the first-born in the family of Abihail; though we are under no necessity of supposing this. The lines of historic possibility are elastic enough to admit of very considerable departures from each of these estimates. The essential point is that no historic probability is violated by placing Mordecai and Esther under the reign of Xerxes.

IV. THE BOOK OF ESTHER AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

The Book of Esther is a substantial addition to our knowledge of the events that belong to general history. Its narrations have supplied the material for so much as is common to it and the writings of Josephus and the Apocrypha. Wherever these enlarge the narrative, they cumber it, giving us pure inventions, or at best improbable traditions. Occupying thus a field that is distinctly and exclusively its own, it throws much light upon the condition of the Persian empire at the

very time when it was at the culmination of its greatness. It shows us the Persian court and society in some aspects that appear in no other work. It enables the historian to reproduce the very scenes in which the military advice that Xerxes sought was given. We are shown the throne-room and the banqueting hall. We learn that discussions of grave matters, and even of points of established usage and law, could go on in the latter. We learn that the assembly which Herodotus knows only as a deliberative council was in fact a great gathering for a long-continued feast; that the prominent and characteristic luxury, as is shown by the very name (a "drinking-festival"),¹ was wine. Indeed, Herodotus calls it an "invited gathering;"² using very different language from that which he employs when he speaks of the council of war which the king summoned when he had reached the Hellespont. There, it is said, "Xerxes sent a second time for the most esteemed of the Persians;"³ a marked instance of an undesigned and unconscious agreement on the part of the one historian with the more explicit declaration of the other. The second allusion makes the occult harmony the more striking. We learn, too, from the Hebrew history, that a part of the king's object in this great feast was to produce a wide impression of the magnificence and grandeur of his court. He who would rewrite the history of Xerxes now may avail himself of the description that is here given of the adornments of that immense hall; its awnings, the most attractive that Oriental looms could produce, fastened to marble pillars by silver rings, and its costly pavements, and wine-cups of gold. It was at this feast extended through half the year that Xerxes laid open his plan for the subjugation of Greece. It was amid all this showing of the resources and splendor at his command that the speeches of Mardonius and Artabanus were made. It greatly relieves the strain upon the credibility and trustworthiness of Herodotus as a historian when we find ourselves warranted in bringing in the wine-cup to explain the persistence and power of a

¹ In the Hebrew, בְּרִיאָה, nearly the same as the Greek συμπόσιον.

² σύλλογον ἐπίκλητον ἔποιετο.

³ δεύτερα μεταπέμψατο Ξέρξης Περσέων τοὺς δοκιμωτάτους.

phantom¹ (which has been so naturally regarded as a trick of Mardonius), and the vacillations of the monarch and of his wisest counsellor.

This counterfeit phantom frightens Xerxes out of the conclusion of his second thought and his better judgment, and overcomes the maturer wisdom of Artabanus, his uncle. It is this, in fact, that seems to turn the scale, and settle the point that the great expedition shall be undertaken. Superstition is potent in its way; but that a phantom should have assailed a man of the courage and wisdom of Artabanus with hot irons, and alarmed him with the attempt to burn out his eyes, and actually have succeeded in driving him, with a loud outcry, from his couch and his room, and been regarded by him still without question as a veritable apparition, is strongly suggestive of a brain from which the fumes of the wine-cup have not wholly passed away.

History cannot afford to neglect such causes when dealing with the great turning-points of imperial power, especially when they afford an easy explanation of that which would otherwise be insoluble; still more when they impress with so much emphasis the most important moral lessons that come from the story of the past.

The incidents that are here contributed may well challenge a comparison with any others that have been made known to us from that distant age. Why should the deliverance of Greece from the Persian yoke by Themistocles and Pausanias be a more interesting event than the deliverance of the Hebrew people by Mordecai and Esther? In the one case it was only a question of vassalage and of tribute; in the other it was a question of unsparing carnage—a doom of death from which there was to be no exception and no reprieve.

This history, for which in some respects there is no parallel, is supported, we may almost say, beyond the possibility of a doubt. It is impossible that any reasonable mind should reflect long upon what is implied in such an observance as the feast of Purim, celebrated by the Jews all over the world, beginning some four or five centuries before Christ, and never

¹ τὸ δρεπόν.

intermittent ; and see how every root and fibre of it is contained in this book, and not find itself held fast by the demonstration and the conviction that the events were real. If we should find a collision between this and the declarations of profane history, the latter must give way. But there is no such collision. There is simply, as in all ancient history, the task of finding the true order and succession of the events, and locating them as they seem to have occurred in the order of time, or of cause and effect.

V. THE FIELD OF EVENTS GEOGRAPHICALLY AND ETHNICALLY CONSIDERED.

The Book of Esther takes us out of the bounds of Palestine. It has nothing to say of Jerusalem, Samaria, the Jordan, Carmel, Lebanon, or Hermon. Its centre of operations is far away in the land of Shinar, at the city of Shushan, or Susa, some four degrees of longitude east of the site of the comparatively modern Bagdad. From this seat of the royal power it gives us an outlook through the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the Persian empire. It is a broad area. Previous history had shown no empire so extensive. The great empires of an earlier date were but satrapies or provinces when absorbed by this. Egypt was but an outlying district. The renowned kingdom of Lydia was not of itself sufficient for a satrapy. The ancient kingdom of Syria, and those of Assyria, Armenia, Babylonia, Media, Bactriana, and India were swallowed up in this vast domain.

The map inserted at the close of this volume sets forth the extent and the divisions of the Persian empire in the time of Xerxes. It will be seen that this empire embraced fragments of the three great original branches of the human family. Side by side, under one government and in one army, we see the Aryan, the Semitic, and the Cushite races. It might well be called a "world-empire."

VI. THE WRITER.

It is no drawback, as regards the value of the book, that the writer is unknown. This is true of a very considerable number

of the sacred books. We are thrown back on conjecture and uncertain and conflicting traditions. As author of the Book of Esther, Mordecai has been frequently suggested. Aben Ezra and Clement of Alexandria have given the sanction of their names to this suggestion ; and the hypothesis is supported by the fact that the writer evinces a knowledge of the royal chronicles and the archives of the empire, and an access to them such as we must suppose Mordecai to have enjoyed. No one had greater facilities for this than he. There is a precision of names and dates and the record of conversations that seems to imply this access to the original sources of knowledge. But there is nothing else to assure us that he was the writer. In ix. 20 it is true that we are told that "Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews" ; and we read in verse 23, "The Jews adopted [i.e. as an ordinance or custom] what they had begun to do, and what Mordecai had written to them" ; and in verse 26, "Now because of all the words of this letter," etc. But this cannot be pressed as certainly bearing on the question of the authorship of the book. All that can be inferred is, that such letters, pertaining to the observance of Purim, were known by the author to have been written by Mordecai. The most that can be said is, that the minuteness of the narrative agrees well with the hypothesis that makes him the author of the book. But there may have been a hundred others, as well or better qualified, to whom he could have given the needed access to the public records. We are told by the Rabbi Azarias that it was written by the high-priest Joiakim. But the strong indications, amounting almost to a certainty, that the book was written in the atmosphere of the Persian court, are against this. Isidore and Augustine ascribe it to Ezra. But all the marked peculiarities of the book, except as regards familiarity with Persian affairs, forbid the adoption of their opinion. It would seem that no one could carefully compare the two books bearing the names of Ezra and Esther without coming to the conclusion that they were certainly written by different authors. Whether Ezra wrote the whole of the book bearing his name, or not, there is enough that is indisputably his to settle this point.

According to the Talmud, the Book of Esther is one of those that were written by the scribes of the Great Synagogue. This would bring the writing somewhere between the time of Ezra and b.c. 300.¹ Fr. W. Schultz says of this tradition that it "evidently has reference not so much to the composition of the book as to its authoritativeness and final editorial supervision." With this understanding of it, the Talmud teaches that the men of the Great Synagogue found the work already in existence, and judged it to be worthy of their editorial sanction.

So far as these ancient opinions antagonize and destroy one another, we must of course set them aside as of no real authority, and only helpful as straws in the general current of early thought. Using them in this way, we may interrogate the book itself as affording the most trustworthy basis for our conclusions. We shall not learn from it the name of the author; but we may learn that which is far more important—something of his capacity and fitness for the work which he undertook; and we may assure ourselves that he wrote from actual observation and personal knowledge. He was familiar with the customs which he exhibits, and made faithful use of the documents which he consulted. He was a Jew, and keenly felt both the peril and the deliverance which he depicts, and no less the fear and distress that were produced by the one, and the exultation and joy that came with the other. We are told that the opening sentence of the book shows that it was not written until after the death of the monarch whose deeds it narrates. But this is only what we should naturally assume. One who was exactly contemporary with Esther might have been not more than thirty-five years of age at the time of Xerxes' death. And one who had received in the susceptible days of his youth his impressions of the greatness and splendor of the empire of Xerxes would very naturally speak of him as "that Xerxes who reigned *from India even to Ethiopia*;" not so much to distinguish him from other kings as to aggrandize him, throwing the emphasis on the words that mark the extent of his dominion.

¹ See Prof. Plumptre's articles, "Scribes," and the "Great Synagogue," in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, iv. 2865-2873, 3139, 3140.

The information, then, which we extract from the book itself, while leaving it among the anonymous books of the Bible, is otherwise as definite as we could ask. The book was written by a Hebrew who was competent as an author, contemporary with the events, familiar with the localities, characters, and customs of which he speaks, and favored with ample opportunity to consult and to quote the public records and the chronicles of the empire.

VII. STYLE OF THE AUTHOR.

There is a general agreement among critics as to the excellence of the style in which this book is written. It is simple, and precisely adapted to the work which the writer undertakes. It is so perfect that no one thinks of the style. We look through a medium so transparent that we have no sight of the medium, but only of the objects and the events. There is no tendency to verbosity or prolixity, yet there is no affectation of conciseness. The writer condenses his statements within the narrowest limits that are consistent with clearness of diction, yet he is never so sparing of words as to be obscure. He does not attempt lofty flights or sublime periods, but aims at distinct impressions, and a clear outline of events. There is no pausing to draw sketches of individual character. The characters are made to exhibit themselves in their words and in their acts. Yet the reader is at no loss in regard to them. No two of them are alike. We could not interchange them without ruining the history.

Much of the fascination of the book is due to the skilful arrangement of parts. There is all the effect which we are accustomed to ascribe to the elaborate weaving of a plot in a drama, or in a work of fiction ; and we find a well-devised denouement. Every thread and fibre is wrought into its place in the fabric, and there is nothing irrelevant.

The Hebrew is very perfect and very pure ; admitting no more Persian words than were indispensable to accuracy in local delineations,—just enough to show that the writer knew how to represent correctly the incidents and usages that had no parallel in the old Hebrew commonwealth to which the

Hebrew language was originally accommodated. Names of offices and the transmission of messages in a way unknown before the days of the Persian empire, etc., required the introduction of new words, which the Jews of Shushan had already learned to use. As regards the few words belonging to the later Hebrew or Aramaic, they are barely sufficient to vindicate for the work the date to which we assign it. If there were none, the omission would be, at least, embarrassing ; if they were greatly multiplied, it would carry the date too far forward to agree with other features of the work.

VIII. OUTLINE OF THE WORK.

The Book of Esther is essentially historical. The events gather about a crisis which may be characterized as *the defeated plot of Haman*. Of course, we must be made acquainted with the locality, the monarch, the individuals who have a prominent part, and the circumstances that brought them into the line of events. We are first shown the extent of the Persian empire under Xerxes ; the great feast which he made for the dignitaries of his realm, the splendor of the banquet-hall, and the display which he made of his wealth and power ; then comes the feast made by Vashti the queen for the women of the court ; then the violation of the proprieties and usages of the Oriental civilization by the monarch in his maudlin state, the refusal of the queen to sacrifice the delicacy of her nature to his unreasonable demand, the king's appeal to his counsellors, and the advice given and accepted that brought about the deposition of the queen and her divorce from the king. Then follows the proposition, which was accepted, to adopt measures to fill the vacancy created by the removal of the queen. This brings in Esther the Jewess, and makes us acquainted with her pedigree, and also introduces Mordecai, her cousin and guardian. Esther falls into the conscription of virgins, and is chosen by the monarch and made his queen. Meanwhile Mordecai gains an official position, which is described as "sitting in the king's gate." The kindred and nationality of Esther remain for the present a secret. Mordecai discovers and reveals a plot against

the king's life ; the conspirators are executed ; and the whole goes upon the record with Mordecai's name as informer.

Another important change is the advancing of Haman the Agagite to the position of prime minister, or chief manager of affairs under the king. A reverence is demanded for him second only to that which was due to the monarch. Mordecai, as a Jew, has some scruple in regard to this, and declines to comply with the demand. Haman is stung by his refusal, and plots not only for his destruction, but for that of all the Jews in the empire. Lots are cast to determine the time that will be most auspicious for the execution of the plot, and the sanction of the king is obtained to a decree for the extermination of the Jews. This becomes known to Mordecai, and he puts on sackcloth, and indulges in demonstrations of mourning that become known to Esther. This leads to an interchange of messages, in which he makes known to her the decree, and urges upon her the great duty of interceding with the king for her people. She points out the danger to herself, but accepts the duty, and addresses herself to it, after a season of fasting on the part of herself and of her people. She seeks an audience with the king, is kindly received, and bidden to declare her request. She goes no farther, at this interview, than to invite the king and Haman to a banquet that she has prepared. At the banquet she still sees reason for delay, and appoints another banquet for the following day.

Haman is flattered and pleased with this attention, but exasperated by passing Mordecai on his way home, and receiving no homage from him. This leads him to the determination to secure the destruction of Mordecai at once. He sets up a stake on his own grounds for the impalement,¹ and repairs in the morning to the palace to obtain the needed permission. Meanwhile, after a sleepless night, the king has determined to render some honor to Mordecai for the timely service by which he had before saved his life. Haman comes in while the king has this in mind, and is met with the question, "What shall be done for the man that the king wishes to honor?" Assuming that the question means no

¹ See Appendix, Excursus E.

other than himself, he at once suggests an imposing public demonstration, and finds, to his intense disappointment and chagrin, that Mordecai is the man to be honored, and that he himself is to conduct the demonstration. The banquet follows immediately, and the queen exposes Haman's bloody plot, and turns the tide of doom against him. The sentence is passed at once, and he is impaled on the stake which he had prepared for Mordecai.

The course of things is now rapidly reversed. Mordecai comes into Haman's place, and is allowed to devise a decree that shall counteract, as far as possible, the decree of doom against the Jews. They are granted full liberty to defend themselves and to destroy their enemies. It is seen that the power and good-will of the government is on their side. And this, while it emboldens the Jews, disheartens their enemies, and greatly diminishes the number of those who were disposed to attack them. The day originally appointed for the slaughter of the Jews becomes a day of deliverance, and of triumph and joy. Thousands of those who were foolhardy enough to attack them are slain, and the sons of Haman are impaled; but the Jews refrain from appropriating the spoil to which, according to the usages of warfare and the special order of the king, they are entitled. The anniversary days of this deliverance are appointed by Mordecai, and accepted by the Jews, as perpetual feast-days, to take the name Purim—the name by which the lot cast by Haman had been designated; and the book is closed with an emphatic statement of the prosperity and greatness of Mordecai in the empire of Persia.

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

CHAPTER I. 1, 2.

¹ And it came to pass in the days of Xerxes — that Xerxes who reigned from India even to Ethiopia, [over] a hundred and twenty-seven provinces —² in those days when the king Xerxes sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the

And it came to pass — וַיְהִי often introduces a narrative in the sense of *it happened*. Some would render the expression “and it was,” the *rav conversive* not only marking the past tense, but also, as they urge, showing that the narrative is connected with earlier Jewish history. **Days** — indefinitely used, like our word *time*. **Xerxes** — the monarch here brought before us is Xerxes the Great, the son of Darius Hystaspis. Abundant evidence of this identification may be found in our Introduction. When Xerxes came to the throne, in B.C. 485, he was probably about thirty-five years old — certainly no older, possibly even ten years younger. (See Rawlinson’s Ancient Monarchies, Vol. iii. p. 445, note 23.) **אָנָה** is allied to *Hindu*, the old native appellation of the Indus River and the province it waters — western **India**, or the Punjab and Sind. By **Ethiopia** the country south of Egypt is, of course, intended. The Persian Empire, which had now reached its extreme territorial magnitude, was divided into about twenty satrapies; but our text gives the number of jurisdictions or governments included under these satrapies, which covered a region of probably not less than two millions of square miles, or more than half the area of modern Europe. (See Note on iii. 12; also Rawlinson’s Ancient Monarchies, Vol. iii. p. 84. Upon **מִרְגָּשׁ**, see remarks of Tayler Lewis, Lange’s Ecclesiastes, p. 34.)

2. **When the king Xerxes sat** — as we should say, when the king was holding his court; in **Shushan** — there were “thrones of the kingdom” also at Ecbatana, Persepolis, and Babylon. The expression, **Shushan the castle**, שָׁׁשָׁן הַכְּסֵלֶת, which occurs ten times in Esther, is

castle ; ³ [that] in the third year of his reign he prepared a banquet for all his princes and his servants, (the military power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces [being] before him), ⁴ when he showed [his] riches, the glory of his kingdom, and [his] splendor, the pomp of his greatness, many days, [even] a hundred and eighty days.

further discussed in an *Excursus*. (See Appendix, *Excursus B.*) This *castle*, or *bērāh, πόλις* of the LXX, *burg* of Luther's version, seems clearly to have been the upper city, or royal quarter, upon the "palace mound," or perhaps upon all three of the mounds; for remains of palaces have been found upon the eastern. (Loftus' Chaldea and Susiana, pp. 401-404.) The western mound (see our plan) was unmistakably the location of the protecting military stronghold.

3. **In the third year of his reign** — doubtless during the early spring of B.C. 483. In his second year, Xerxes had marched into Egypt to subdue a revolt, and, according to Ctesias, had caused a rising in Babylon to be suppressed, and the temple and many of the shrines of that city to be destroyed. It can hardly be doubted, then, that the present gathering of "his princes and servants" (Herod. vii. 8) was intended to afford opportunity for consultation concerning the famous expedition into Greece which he was now planning; **a banquet** — literally, *a drinking-feast, a symposium*. For such banquets the Persians in Xerxes' day were famous (Herod. i. 133); **for all his princes and his servants** — these classes are further described by appositives, suggesting (1) the high military officers of the empire, (2) the civil powers. **Military power**, *ხաշ*; since it is not probable that the entire force of Persia and Media was present at Susa, Bertheau thinks that only the body-guard of Xerxes (see Herodotus vii. 40, 41) is intended. Other scholars take the meaning to be that the host, or military force, was present simply in its captains and leaders considered as representing it. **The nobles**, literally *the first men*, are those of hereditary rank, Persians; **princes of the provinces** are the satraps and others invested with authority, but not distinctively Persians; **before him** — before his face, is emphatic by position, and seems to mean in his very presence.

4. For six months Xerxes kept "open house," and, with the ostentation which was one of his chief characteristics, displayed his wealth and luxury in prodigal hospitality to thousands of the officers of government, who doubtless came and went as they had occasion. The monarch enjoyed a brief and paltry satisfaction in the amazement of

⁵ And when those days were fulfilled, the king prepared for all the people found in Shushan the castle, for both great and small, a banquet seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. ⁶ [There were] white and violet awnings,

the gaping multitude—a happiness too soon turned into gall by one whom the Oriental despises, a woman.

5. An especial closing **banquet** is now given to all the men who are dwelling or visiting in the royal town. Literally it is *a drinking*, the word being the same as in i. 3. But the LXX gives δοχῆν in ver. 3, here τότον. A **court**, ἡττή, is an area, open above, but surrounded by walls, colonnades, or perhaps, as in the present case, only by trees and shrubs. This **garden** was the paradise of which the Persians were so fond (Genius' Lex. *sub* סְדֵךְ; Lange's Ecclesiastes, p. 32). ἡττή, which occurs only in Esther (i. 5; vii. 7, 8), and in Esther solely in the present combination (with τότον), seems to be a form of חַדְרָה *palace*. So the LXX (*οὐκον*) suggests. It may therefore designate distinctively the great pillared hall, the foundations of which have been discovered upon the north mound (see on the topography of Shushan, Appendix, Excursus B). Rawlinson supposes the locality of the feast to have been the space around this magnificent structure, excluding its central group of pillars, but including the porticos, and amounting to an area of 62,949 square feet, or not quite an acre and a half. But since we have Ferguson with us (art. Shushan, Smith's Bible Dict.) we venture to differ from one whose opinion carries great weight. Rawlinson's locality would hardly be described as "the court of the garden." If the ἡττή were a palace like Sargon's, an interior court planted as a garden would be supposable; but the existing remains of ancient Persian palaces warrant no thought of such a court. This "court of the garden of the palace" was probably upon the north mound, and east—possibly west—of the great hall to which we have just referred (see note upon "white marble," next verse).

6. The fact that there is no verb at the beginning of this verse Bertheau explains thus: "Mere intimations and, as it were, exclamations of excited admiration enter into the account that is attempted to be given, instead of quiet description." The same author adds: "The מ [initial letter with which the verse opens] was written large, perhaps to indicate by the writing itself that a new description had been begun." Bertheau holds that the opening words of this discourse depict *hangings* by which this part of the garden was separated from

fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to rings of silver and pillars of white marble; couches of gold and silver on a pavement of blue stone, and white marble, and alabaster,

other portions. It is, however, the more common opinion that **awnings** are intended; for, though the text gives us no light upon the matter, the usages of the East and the freedom of the banquet seem to favor the latter view (Layard, Nin. and Bab., p. 530). The three materials of the awnings are considered by most critics to be fine white linen, cotton cloth, and blue stuff. Concerning the two latter translations there can be no question. The blue was more exactly **violet**. Cotton was not at that time a cheap fabric, and the Persian captivity probably first made the Jews familiar with its use. (For the high estimation set upon cotton in Babylon, see *Anc. Mon.*, Vol. ii. p. 570.) The opening word we prefer to regard, as Rawlinson apparently does (*Pulpit Com.*, and *Speaker's Com.*, *in loco*; see *A. V.* also), as a noun equivalent to *whiteness*, *white cloth*, or, in combination with the following word, *white cotton*. For we have another word in the next clause, בַּיִן, which unquestionably denotes white linen, and the two words מְנֻרָה and בַּיִן occur in proximity in viii. 15; though בְּרִיבָה, *cotton*, is not there combined with מְנֻרָה, as if the latter alone might then be a sufficient designation. מְנֻרָה occurs in only these two instances in the Bible; but the use of בְּרִיבָה (and בְּרִיבָה, a later word) is not unfavorable to this view. Why, indeed, should two kinds of white cloth be employed? Bertheau escapes this difficulty by rendering בְּרִיבָה “variegated material.” But alternate strips of white and violet, the royal colors (*Speaker's Com.*, Esther i. 6), would certainly be a very probable combination, one which we find in Mordecai's robe of honor (viii. 15). Thus understood, the *A. V.* is correct, if the word “green,” for which there is no modern advocate, be omitted. In the next clause, בַּיִן is unquestionably fine white linen. אֲדֹמָה was the royal purple of antiquity—a color obtained from certain shell-fish, and doubtless very near our red (Smith's Bib. Dict., art. Colors). If (as we question under ver. 5) the awnings were extended from the central pillars to the porticos, sixty feet, remarkably strong cords, attachments, and supports would indeed be needed. The material of the **pillars** is שֶׁבֶת, which was also one element of the pavement, and seems clearly to have been **white marble**. If these pillars were of white marble, as we think, this feast was not held under the porticos of the discovered hall, the columns of which are of **blue marble** (see וְשֵׁם, in discussion of

and red stone. ⁷ And they gave drink in vessels of gold, even vessels differing from one another; and royal wine was abundant, according to the hand of the king. ⁸ And the drinking was according to the mandate: No compelling. For thus had the king enjoined upon every official of his house: Do according to the pleasure of each man.

the Pavement, Appendix, Excursus C). **Couches**—divans for reclining at the feast, and possibly, though not probably, for “all the people found in Shushan the castle, for both great and small” (ver. 5), to sleep upon. These couches were perhaps low bedsteads of silver and gold, such as Xerxes took with him on his Grecian expedition (Herod. ix. 80-82), or divans covered with glittering fabrics. The **pavement** was not one of mosaics or small tesserae, but of slabs, or certainly of pieces not much less than a foot square, such as compose all floors yet remaining from the ancient empires. The materials we believe to have been, as nearly as they can now be determined and briefly indicated, **blue stone, and white marble, and alabaster, and red stone**. Certainty is as hopeless as recovery of the pavement. Though differing somewhat otherwise, the A.V. margin seems to coincide with our text as to the colors. (For the grounds of these renderings, see Excursus upon the Pavement.) Few traces of conformity to the Hebrew are to be found in the LXX translation of this verse and the next. The additions and omissions are surprising, if not amusing.

7. Golden drinking vessels of the Assyrians, often representing the head and neck of some animal, as a lion or a bull, have been found. Similar goblets were common among the Greeks and Etrurians (Layard, Nineveh and its Remains, Vol. ii. p. 303). This **royal wine** was very possibly that of Helbon (Ezek. xxvii. 18, and Bible Dict.), of which Plutarch (Life of Alexander) says that the Persian monarch used no other. The remaining expression describes the free abundance of this costly drink, as worthy of so rich and magnificent a king. “With a liberal hand,” or “in right royal fashion,” would be a correct interpretation.

8-11. The edict for this feast, **no compelling**, must have occurred to Xerxes when he was exceedingly clear-headed. It was all the more needful because the king did not set an example of abstinence (ver. 10), and because the Persians at this period were hard drinkers (Herod. i. 133). The language implies that compulsion was at least sometimes employed. Abstinence on such an occasion might, but for

⁹ Also Vashti the queen prepared a banquet for the women in the royal house which [pertained] to the king Xerxes. ¹⁰ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbonah, Bigtha and Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas, the seven eunuchs who ministered in the presence of the king Xerxes, ¹¹ to bring Vashti the queen before the king, with the crown royal, to show the peoples and the princes her beauty ; for fair in appearance was she.

this decree, have been esteemed an insult to the king. It seems there were officers of Xerxes' realm whose religion or practices might forbid the use of wine, at least to excess. But in our own days of light and liberty are there not many occasions at which men are brought under moral (immoral?) compulsion to violate their preferences, if not their principles ? Rather, if we must have modern symposiarchs, let them adopt the motto of this feast, " No compelling." **מְנַדֵּת** — **mandate** — is counted a word of the later Hebrew. It is the ordinary term for irreversible statutes in Esther, Daniel, and Ezra, but occurs only once elsewhere (Deut. xxxii. 2). On the other hand, **מִשְׁׁרָת**, the ordinary Old Testament word for law, is found but once in Esther, other synonyms not at all (see ii. 8). **Vashti**, whoever she was, plainly held the recognized position of Xerxes' consort. This particular **royal house** was evidently one department of the harem which, with its court and various halls, would afford ample space for such a banquet (see ii. 3); **eunuchs**, **בָּרִיבָּתָן**, occurs often in the Old Testament, and is uniformly rendered in the Sept. and Vulg. by the equivalents of our text. The etymology and use of the word render its primary meaning unquestionable. This meaning it certainly always involves in the Book of Esther, in which it occurs twelve times. To serve as chamberlains of the king and attendants of the harem were the common offices of these persons, who were supposed to be especially trustworthy, morally as well as physically, — an opinion not always well-founded (e.g. ii. 21). Upon the seventh day of indulgence the king reaches such a degree of *bonhomie* as to command that the queen should be brought to the feast, and her beauty be displayed to the **peoples**, **בָּרָבָּרָתָן**, meaning the representatives of the many nationalities of the empire. **Crown**, **גְּבָרָתָן**. This word, only occurring in Esther, is used of the tiara of both king (vi. 8) and queen (ii. 17). **גְּבָרָתָן** is a common word for "crown," used in the case of Mordecai (viii. 15). The present word doubtless means the

¹² But the queen Vashti refused to come at the command of the king, which was given by the eunuchs. And the king was exceedingly enraged, and his wrath burned in him. ¹³ And the king said to the wise men who understood the times (for such was the manner of the king towards all who understood law and judgment; ¹⁴ And next to him were Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tharshish, Meres, Marsena, Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, who saw the face of the king,

kidaris of the Persian monarchs—a tall, stiff cap, set with jewels. No monument exhibits a Persian woman of this period; but probably the queen's *kidaris* differed from her partner's only in its details (Anc. Mon., Vol. iii. p. 204). **Ministered**, ver. 10, means *did honorary service*. The LXX makes the seven men “deacons,” in the original sense; and in that version the first upon the list is Haman, which Mehuman would resemble if the ♀ be omitted. As for the six, it is difficult to discover much relationship between the Greek and Hebrew names.

12. The law of Persian propriety, like that now ruling in the Orient, forbade woman to unveil herself before the other sex in general. On such an occasion as this it was the right of a lawful wife to refuse her presence. Even at Belshazzar's feast in Babylon, where history shows that this rule of modesty was less authoritative, it appears that the queen mother (Nitocris?) was not present until the hand upon the wall summoned her (Barnes upon Dan. v. 3, 4). Vashti's refusal to obey the royal command was an act to be commended under any possible interpretation of this passage. But it was a serious step. No wonder that it should arouse the wrath of a Persian king, especially when under the influence of the intoxicating cup.

13, 14. **Wise men who understood the times** were probably adepts in astrology, the science of sciences in ancient Persia. They were magi, pre-eminent in that and all other wisdom. The latter part of vs. 13 seems to suggest that the king was accustomed to consult such men concerning important matters; **understood**—therefore were qualified to interpret (Josephus, Antiq. xi. vi. 1); **law and judgment**—the latter, in contradistinction to the former, means unenacted equity, or certainly justice in a more general sense, as taught by all human and divine laws.

The Persian king's cabinet usually consisted of seven counsellors (Ezra vii. 14; comp. Herod. iii. 84; Ctesias 14). If there were other advisers, as **next to him** might imply, these were their representatives.

[and] sat first in the kingdom) : ¹⁵ According to law what is to be done to the queen Vashti, inasmuch as she has not done the bidding of the king Xerxes, given by the eunuchs ?

¹⁶ And Memucan said before the king and the princes : Not to the king alone has Vashti the queen done wrong, but to all the princes and all the peoples who are in all the provinces of the king Xerxes. ¹⁷ For the refusal of the queen will go forth to all the women and make their lords despicable in their eyes, when they shall say : The king Xerxes commanded to bring Vashti the queen before him, and she came not. ¹⁸ And this very day the princesses of Persia and Media, who have heard of the refusal of the queen, will reply to all the princes of the king, and there will be contempt and strife enough. ¹⁹ If it seem good to the king, let a royal mandate go forth from him, and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media — and it shall not be changed — that Vashti shall not come before the king Xerxes, and that her queenship the king will give to another better than she ; ²⁰ and the decree of the king which he shall make will be heard in all his kingdom, — for it is

Some of them may have been of foreign birth, but all had evidently received Persian names. These seven were permitted to stand in the presence of the king ; to sit, and sit first, before all other potentates of the realm. At this point the frequent divergence of the LXX is especially marked, in its giving only three names, and those apparently of its own coinage — Arkesaeus, Sarsathaeus, and Malisear.

15–20. To king Xerxes' inquiry for the statute law which punishes the disobedience of a wife, **Memucan** replies (in the LXX, Μουχαῖος, a person not before mentioned in that text). Possibly less acceptable advice had already been suggested ; or Memucan may have spoken first because of seniority, or for some other reason — his name being rhetorically placed at the end of the list in ver. 14. Memucan's words are shrewd, bespeaking one wise in human nature, and in the peculiar variety thereof found in an Oriental despot. He first artfully exaggerates the offence of the queen into an evil which it was for the interest of every husband in the empire to have at once checked. He then suggests a decree which would have this effect, and finally describes the beneficial results to be expected from its enactment. In ver. 18

vast,— and all the women will give honor to their lords, both to great and small.

21 And the counsel was good in the eyes of the king and the princes, and the king did according to the counsel of Meinucan.
22 And he sent letters into all the provinces of the king, into every province according to its writing and to every people according to its tongue, that each man should be ruler in his own house, and should speak according to the language of his own people.

Persia is placed before **Media**, because it had now assumed the precedence; while in Daniel (vi. 8, 15, etc.) the order of the names is adapted to the Median viceroy then upon the throne; **speak**, ver. 18, is peculiarly emphatic, having a force that only an Oriental can fully appreciate, equivalent to *speak out*, or indulge the power of the tongue in reply or refusal. [The LXX, with its usual freedom, paraphrases thus: “Shall dare in like manner to dishonor their husbands.” — Ed.] According as woman’s sphere has been narrow, has she been skilful to make her words more dreadful than the hottest assaults of war. **For it is vast**, a sly flattery. **Honor**, ver. 20. “Here and in the account of the honors paid to Mordecai the English word ‘honor’ is not at all adequate to the translating of the Hebrew; וָתַחֲנֹן retains its meaning of costliness or preciousness, designating that which is valuable because it is scarce — that which it is difficult to get and easy to lose. The idea here is that the women will come to regard their husbands as peculiarly valuable and rather precarious possessions, against the alienation of which they need to guard with peculiar care.” — Prof. Willis J. Beecher.

21, 22. The counsel was unanimously approved, and the decree was enacted. Vashti was put away, and all queenly possessions and rights taken from her. The last clause of ver. 22 probably refers to domestic trouble which arose from the diversity of nationalities and languages common in the households of these polygamous Persians. But, whatever the meaning, concerning the correctness of our rendering, in which substantially the LXX and Vulgate have preceded us, there can be no question.

With reference to the diversity of languages, we cite one of our earlier collaborators: “In the passages quoted the statement several times appears: ‘unto every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language.’ Two quite different things

II. ¹ After these things, when the wrath of the king Xerxes had subsided, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done and what was decreed against her.

² Then the young men of the king, his attendants, said : Let young virgins, fair in appearance, be sought for the king.

³ And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his

are referred to in the words, namely, the language used, and the character in which that language was written. Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew, Assyrian, etc., are not only different languages, but each has a distinct character. In the hundred and twenty-seven provinces subject to Persia we have no means of knowing how many different languages were spoken, or how many distinct alphabets were used; probably the number was large, much larger than is known to history. Think of the number of educated scribes required to carry on correspondence in the various tongues!" — S. M.

CHAP. II. 1. When the wrath of the king Xerxes had subsided — doubtless his anger was brief in proportion to its violence : and, as these words seem to intimate, within a very few weeks he could think more calmly of his former queen ; he remembered Vashti — evidently she was a woman of power, as well as of beauty and modesty. She had been more to Xerxes than he was aware, and now to his sober judgment what she had done only enhanced her worth. He remembered also what was decreed against her. כָּרַע means cut off, decided irrevocably. The question stirred itself within him, Did not Vashti deserve honor, rather than punishment ? Xerxes, a heathen, utterly selfish and sensual as he was, felt that he had done wrong.

2. Perhaps not young men distinctively. The word was used, as our "boy" often is, for an attendant of any age. כְּרָבִים denotes those who do honorary service, such as chamberlains, lords in waiting : in distinction from the סְרָבִים servants or slaves who performed the more menial duties. Xerxes' personal attendants saw the evidences of remorse. All had reason to fear such a frame of mind ; while some of them may have had special reason to dread a recall of Vashti. On this account they propose to the king a plan, the details of which are given in the following verses. נְאֹלֶת, a condition it was more needful to specify in Persia than in our own country ; fair in appearance — "beautiful," as we say.

3. For Shushan the castle occurring here and in ver. 5, 8, (see

kingdom, and let them gather every young virgin, fair in appearance, to Shushan the castle, to the house of the women, to the care of Hege the king's eunuch, the keeper of the women, and let their precious ointments be given, ⁴ and let the maiden who is pleasing in the eyes of the king reign instead of Vashti.

And the counsel was good in the eyes of the king, and he did so.

⁵ There was a man, a Jew, in Shushan the castle, and his name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish a Benjamite ⁶ who had been carried captive from

i. 2), **the house of the women** is specified as a part of the royal quarter (ver. 8). As a rule, in the East, a separate portion of the house, or a distinct building within the same enclosure, is assigned to the females of a family. Such was the custom from a very early age. The remains of the palace of Sargon at Khorsabad are the best illustration of the Assyrian form of a domiciliary palace. (For details see Fergusson, Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis, pp. 239, 251; Anc. Mon., Vol. i. p. 281.) It is altogether probable that the gynæcæum of Xerxes at Susa consisted of one or more distinct edifices, as at Persepolis, of which see our plan; **their precious ointments**, ver. 9, 12.

4. "Wicked men are ready to follow advice when it encourages them in vileness and sin. The attendants show their character in the counsel they give, and Xerxes shows his character in that he is so ready to comply with it." — J. M. G.

5, 6. One of God's chosen people now comes upon the scene: **a man, a Jew** — as we should say, "a certain Jew." The name **Mordecai** is probably connected with Marduk or Merodach, the Assyrian god. "It may have been given to his son by a Babylonian Jew without thought of heathen derivation and meaning, or out of compliment to some Babylonian friend or master." — Rawlinson. Some identify Mordecai with Matacas, one of the most powerful of Xerxes' eunuchs (see ver. 7). The Mordecai of Ezra ii. 2; Neh. vii. 7 is not the person now before us; and recurrence of favorite names in the same tribe or family is also seen in the case of **Shimei** and **Kish**, if we compare this passage with 2 Sam. xvi. 5; 1 Sam. ix. 1. These could not have been the same persons with those of our text; for relationship to the famous king Saul, did it exist, would surely be mentioned in a genealogical identification. Moreover, chronological considerations

Jerusalem with the captives who were brought away with Jeconiah, king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, made captive. ⁷ And he was bringing up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter; for she had neither father nor mother. And the maiden was beautiful in form and fair in appearance; and at the death of her father and mother Mordecai had taken her to himself for a daughter.

forbid that it should have been Mordecai who was carried captive with Jeconiah, B.C. 598, more than one hundred years before this time, but favor the alternative that it was Kish. The conjunctions וְ, at the beginning of ver. 7, and before וְ in ver. 5 afford further evidence in this direction. We may be certain that **who** refers to Kish, and not to Mordecai, and that all these persons are new to the sacred record. Three important deportations of the Jews are mentioned, as follows: (1) During the reigns of Jehoiakim, B.C. 605; (2) Jehoiachin or Jecouiah, B.C. 598; and (3) Zedekiah, B.C. 586 (2 Kings xxiv., xxv.).

7. Judging from its ordinary use, the verb נָשַׁא suggests "that Mordecai took Hadassah in her infancy, and bore her on his arm with the love and care of a father." It is (1) not mentioned that he had wife or children of his own. This mere lack of evidence, with (2) his adoption of a female cousin, and (3) "the ready access which he had to the harem of Xerxes" (ii. 11, 22; viii. 7) lead Rawlinson to the conclusion that Mordecai was a eunuch (Speaker's Com., Esther ii. 5). We question whether these arguments are sufficient. The adoption mentioned, even if Mordecai were an ordinary unmarried man, is not surprising among Jews, wherever they were living. Certainly, the third reason is not determinative, as is shown below (ver. 11, 22). A probability in this direction, however, may be drawn from certain scripture (2 Kings xx. 17, 18; Isa. xxxix. 7), and from the Persian customs concerning those who served in the royal precincts, as Mordecai plainly did. Hadassah is a Hebrew name, from *hadas*, "the myrtle," a beautiful and favorite shrub of the East. In the vocal elements of this word Tyrwhitt finds Atossa, a favorite royal name of the Persian court. **Esther** probably had the meaning in old Persian of *star*, a word which has essentially the same consonantal elements with Esther; a likeness obtaining also in ἀστρίς Greek, *çtare* Zend, and *sitareh* modern Persian. Of similar derivation is Ashtoreth, the name of the Assyrian goddess, from which, as some suggest, comes the name

⁸ And it came to pass when the command of the king and his law were heard, and many maidens were gathered to Shushan the castle, to the care of Hege, Esther also was taken to the house of the king, to the care of Hege, the keeper of the women. ⁹ And the maiden was pleasing in his eyes and received kindness before him; and he hastened to give her her precious ointments and her portions, and to appoint her from the house of the king seven selected maidens; and he changed her and her maidens to the best part of the house of the women.

¹⁰ Esther had not declared her people and her lineage; for

of Esther. **Uncle**—**חַנְכָה**, an uncle on the father's side, literally, *a friend*. Esther's father, Abihail (ver. 15), and Mordecai's father, Jair, were brothers. The heroine of our story was probably twenty years old, and Mordecai could not have been less than thirty or forty, since it appears that he adopted his cousin when she was young.

8. Unless the piety of the Jews had greatly declined, they could only abhor an alliance with a heathen, even though king of Persia. But, whatever his previous feeling, after escape became hopeless Mordecai desired that Esther might win the prize, as we see from ver. 10. May not Mordecai have had faith that Esther was to prove acceptable, and as queen bring blessings to her captive race? May he not have prayed that God would thus bless their nation? That the maidens were brought to **the king's house** does not prove a palace like Sargon's; for the house of the women, however located, was royal property; nor is any wide separation between "the house of the king" and "the house of the women" indicated by ver. 13. The Hebrew of **Hege** in ver. 3 is here and in ver. 15 Hegai, as in the A.V. Slight variations in the spelling of proper names are now, and have always been, too common; **command**, **מִצְרָא**, seems to indicate a less formal decree than **law** ("mandate"; see i. 8).

9. **Pleasing**, literally, *good*. **טוֹבָה** and **טוֹבָת** occur continually. "Good" covers a very broad range of approval in Hebrew, Arabic, and most Oriental tongues. For the word **רִנְצָנָה**, **portions** (of food), compare ix. 19, 22, and concerning the custom, Dan. i. 5. It seems that **seven maidens** were given to each candidate for royal favor; but Esther's were specially **selected**.

10. The knowledge that Esther belonged to a subject **people** might

Mordecai had enjoined upon her that she should not declare [them]. ¹¹ And every day Mordecai walked before the court of the house of the women to learn of the welfare of Esther and what was done with her.

¹² And when the turn of each maiden came to go to the king Xerxes, after she had been twelve months according to the law of the women ; for so were fulfilled the days of their purification, six months with the oil of myrrh, and six months with fragrant spices and with the precious ointments of the women,

have aroused prejudice, hence Mordecai's command. Her name being Persian, no one in authority seems to have suspected her true nationality. There "is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccl. iii. 7). "When the proper time came Esther made known the fact that she belonged to a conquered race (vii. 4). We should never fear to stand by the truth ; but there may be a wise choice in the times and ways of announcing it." — J. M. G.

11. Probably Mordecai, since he lived in Shushan the *berah* (ver. 5), already served in some humble capacity at the gate of the king ; though it seems implied in iv. 2 that, unless clad in mourning, any citizen might enter this gate ; **court**, etc., seem to indicate that the harem buildings were grouped around an open square, or had an interior open square, as at Khorsabad. All such buildings, being of cheaper materials than stone, have perished ; but their arrangement probably differed considerably from the pillared halls and palaces. The supposition of a double entrance to the harem court, like that at Khorsabad, might explain the *hithpael*, **לָבַדְתָּ**, *to walk up and down*, or its use may picture frequent passages between Mordecai's place of official duty and his post of anxiety. But what reason is there for supposing that any man might not walk before this harem entrance, and seize opportunities to communicate with attendants on their exit or entrance. "Mordecai's fatherly care is beautiful ; equalled only by Esther's filial affection and obedience." — J. M. G. Indeed, **every day** hardly does justice to the double emphasis of the original in its expression of Mordecai's intense anxiety.

12. After she had been twelve months, or, after twelve months had passed. **Myrrh** was especially valued for its purifying power and fragrance (Ps. xlv. 8 ; Prov. vii. 17). Under **spices** cosmetics of less note are comprehensively included. **Ointments** (ver. 3, 9), literally,

—¹³ in this manner did the maiden go to the king; everything which she asked was given her to go with her from the house of the women to the house of the king. ¹⁴ At evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the care of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch, the keeper of the concubines. She did not go any more to the king unless the king was pleased with her and she was called by name.

¹⁵ And when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, whom he took to himself for a daughter, came to go to the king, she desired nothing but that which Hege, the king's eunuch, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther was receiving favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

furbishments, which were rubbed upon the person, especially after the protracted Oriental bath. For all such purposes the service of the seven selected attendants was necessary.

13. On this occasion the maiden was permitted, for at least once in her life, to array herself in the most costly attire and ornaments which the king's treasures contained. The love of display might indulge itself to the full; and the differences of taste, ambition, and character must have been singularly manifest. Concerning the two houses here mentioned, see ver. 14 below. It can hardly be supposed that the maiden might have *for her own* all the wealth in which she could array herself. Even Xerxes' treasures would soon have been depleted by such license. The text records no more than that she was permitted to *array* herself for this occasion in **everything which she asked**.

14. There were two, and probably three, "houses" or departments in Xerxes' gynecaeum: (1) the house of the virgins; (2) **the second house**, or that of the concubines; and probably (3) a house for the queen. The house of the **concubines** was under the control of **Shaashgaz**, while Hege, who had special charge of the first house, seems also to have had a general superintendency of the whole seraglio.

15. **Daughter of Abihail** (see ver. 7); **did not ask for anything**, etc. It was the mark of unusual wisdom and self-restraint, if not of even nobler qualities, that Esther in this supreme hour manifested no self-will concerning her adornments, but left it to those whose judgment was better than her own. Can we suppose that she was one of those . too rare women who are not wholly slaves to the love of display and

¹⁶ And Esther was taken to the king Xerxes, to the royal house, in the tenth month, that is, the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. ¹⁷ And the king loved Esther more than all the women. And she received favor and kindness from him above all the virgins. And he placed the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

¹⁸ And the king prepared a great banquet for all his princes

to greed for dress and jewelry? The tempter still leads our sisters astray. For even a heathen and a sensualist perceives the superior value of a woman who is modest and who respects herself too highly — lives too far above such things — to suppose that men's preferences are always determined by outward adorning. If it may be received, a little of the wisdom of 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4 might be profitable for "the life which now is," of which we have illustration in the narrative before us; **was receiving favor** probably refers to the judgment of those who saw her arrayed for the king's presence.

16. **Tebeth**, which does not elsewhere occur in the Bible, much resembles the tenth Egyptian month *Tabi* or *Tubi*, and nearly synchronizes with our January; **in the seventh year of his reign** — the six months' feast, at the close of which Vashti was disgraced, began in Xerxes' third year, b.c. 483. In 481 he departed from Sardis on his Grecian expedition. During the interval thus indicated the maidens were gathered, and the plan recorded at the beginning of this chapter had its inception. Returning from his disastrous defeat, Xerxes spent the summer of 479 at Sardis (Amer. Cyclop., *sub Xerxes*). It could hardly have been earlier than the end of that year that Esther was taken to the royal house.

17. **Loved Esther more than all** of course means, more than he loved any other one of the women. Concerning the **crown** he placed upon her head, see i. 11.

18. **Esther's banquet** was a memorable one. Perhaps the words denote the annual celebration, under this name, of the queen's coronation. **Rest** is the exact translation. Many think it means not merely or chiefly a holiday, but a temporary release from taxation, and perhaps to some extent from military conscription or service. Such a "rest" would be exceedingly opportune when the resources of the empire had been exhausted by the Grecian expedition, and the loyalty of the people might be somewhat strained by the disastrous result.

and his servants,—Esther's banquet. And he granted a rest to the provinces, and gave gifts according to the hand of the king.

¹⁹ And when virgins were gathered the second time, then

Herodotus (iii. 67) ascribes such a release to Pseudo-Smerdis. Robes of honor were common royal gifts (*Cyropaedia* viii. 3; *Anab.* i. 9, § 22); according to the hand of the king — see i. 7.

19. Another scene now comes before us. Its date is fixed by the words, and when virgins were gathered the second time—an event doubtless well remembered by the early readers of Esther. Or there may be reference to the fact that “requisitions for virgins were often made to supply the harem of the king. The heart sickens at the thought; the whole nature revolts at the idea. Yet this is the world without the gospel; this is man when he can follow his inclinations.”—J. M. G. Sat in the gate of the king—had some official position there, evidently humble; hence Mordecai might more readily overhear the plot, but would prefer to certify the king through Esther. In his official capacity there would be additional indignity in his failing to bow before Haman (iii. 2; *Pulpit Com.*, v. 20). The expression gate of the king — שַׁבְּתָן הַשְׁבִּט — occurs eleven times in this book, sometimes in its primary signification, at other times apparently meaning the court which met there, and which was designated by its place of sitting. The gate of an Oriental palace is not a mere entrance, but is ordinarily flanked at least by recesses for guards, sometimes by towers containing rooms below and overhead. It was often a place for holding courts, and even for royal audience. Hence Sublime Porte (gate) which originally meant the chief entrance of the Sultan's palace, has come to denote the government of the Turkish empire. In modern Persia *Der-i-khanah* (gate of the palace) is the name of the hall of supreme justice and royal audience (*Ker Porter's Travels*, Vol. ii. p. 750; *Smith's Bible Dict.*, *sub*-*Palace*). To sit in the gate of the king may be a circumlocution for served in the royal presence. Thus, although Daniel was one of Nebuchadnezzar's highest officers, the expression is used of him. (*Dan.* ii. 49. שַׁבְּתָן, here employed, is a Chaldee form for שְׁבֵט. See No. 1 under latter, in *Gesenius' Lex.*) The LXX has αὐλή for gate in all these cases, except in *Esth.* iv. 2, where it has πύλη, and where there is doubtless reference to the propylon. In *Cyrop.* 1, 3, 2; 8, 3, 2, and 11; 8, 6, 7 αἱ θύραι is used for the Persian court. But that “the king's gate” means more than the royal presence sometimes, if not

Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate. ²⁰ Esther had not declared her lineage and her people, as Mordecai commanded her; for Esther was doing the bidding of Mordecai as when she was in tutelage under him.

²¹ During those days while Mordecai was sitting in the king's gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, of the keepers of the entrance, became enraged, and sought to lay hands upon the king Xerxes. ²² And the matter was known to Mordecai, and he disclosed it to Esther the queen. And

always, in Esther, appears from vi. 10, 12, and probably from v. 9, and most cases of its use. Here it seems to refer literally to a propylon, like one of those whose remains exist at Persepolis — a small hall, the roof or entablature of which was supported by four columns. Possibly the propylon of the great hall, probably fronting that structure and located near the present edge of the north mound, was this "gate" (see plan of that mound and *Excursus upon the Topography*).

20. The record of ver. 10 still remains true, and is repeated to account for the official insignificance of Mordecai. That queen Esther should yet do the bidding of her humble guardian, as when she was in tutelage under him, shows that she was a remarkable character. Here, as elsewhere, the LXX officially inserts the name of God.

21. **Bigthan** may have been the Bigtha of i. 10, and is called Bigthana in vi. 2. On the variation of names, see ver. 8 above. **Teresh** is not elsewhere mentioned. **Θυ** is literally the *threshold*, as appears in Judg. xix. 27. It seems probable that these men kept the very entrance to the king's own apartments, and hence, being provoked by some matter to us unknown (though the LXX professes to give the cause), they could hope to destroy him without much difficulty. **Xerxes** was finally slain by domestic conspiracy, as was also Artaxerxes Ochus at a later day.

22. Josephus gives an account of the manner in which Mordecai learned of the plot (Ant. xi. 6, § 4); but we find here no confirmation of his story; in the name of **Mordecai** — but not revealing his relation to her (viii. 1). His self-restraint, if not his unselfishness, was probably the key to Mordecai's subsequent elevation. Had he sooner made it known that Esther was his adopted daughter, it is likely he would have failed to learn of this plot, and thus to save the king's life. There is no evidence here, and it is improbable according

Esther told it to the king in the name of Mordecai. ²³ And the matter was examined and found out, and both of them were impaled on a tree. It was also written in the book of the daily affairs before the king.

III. ¹After these things the king Xerxes magnified Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, and promoted him, and

to Oriental customs, that Mordecai had a personal interview with the queen (ver. 7).

23. מִלְּקָה, which is rendered *hang* in the A.V. as a rule, really means *to impale*. The victim, usually being first put to death, was hung aloft upon the point of a stake or pole, עץ (lit. *tree*, hence *timber*, *post*, etc.). Doubtless the common method was that represented in Nineveh and its Remains (Vol. ii. p. 369; see also p. 374), in which the point of the pale entered the chest below the breast-bone. Besides references in Esther and Ezra to the Persian custom, there are allusions to impalement among the Egyptians and Jews in Gen. xl. 19, 22; Deut. xxi. 22, etc. (For the whole literature of the subject, see *Excursus upon Early Modes of Execution*.) In the book of the daily affairs — such journals were kept before the Jewish monarchs also, and our scriptural books of Kings and Chronicles are probably based upon these records. The Hebrew name of “chronicles” is exactly the expression here, בְּבֵן תְּקִבִּים; **before the king** — either because preserved in his presence, or, more probably, written under his inspection, that they might be accurate and complete. Herodotus tells us (viii. § 5) that the Persians inserted in these records the names of those who should be honored.

CHAP. III. 1. **Magnified**—literally, *greatened*. This greatness was not the result of the development of pure and noble principles from within, but it was applied to Haman from without; it was wholly external. Manifestly such factitious and superficial greatness was but a poor substitute for the genuine. A base and brutal soul like Haman's can be ennobled by no such process. Read in the light of the subsequent narrative, and taking into account the *characters* of the two men, the statement that *Xerxes* “greatened” *Haman* has the sound of bitter irony. **Haman**—supposed to mean *celebrated*, or else to be equivalent to Mercury. **Hammedatha**—Gesenius takes the first syllable of this name to be the Hebrew article. Fuerst thinks the name denotes *given by Haomo*—a Persian Ized or angel (Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, ii.

set his seat above all the princes who were with him. ² And all the servants of the king who were in the king's gate were bowing and prostrating themselves before Haman ; for so had the king commanded concerning him—but Mordecai neither bowed nor prostrated himself.

³ And the servants of the king who were in the king's gate

324). **The Agagite**—the Septuagint has *Bovyāos*, the *Bugaean*. According to Ewald, in some mss. of the Septuagint the name appeared as *Tωγαῖος*. The Targum asserts, and Josephus seems to imply, that Haman, being a descendant of Agag (1 Sam. xv. 8), was an Amalekite. This is possible, yet somewhat doubtful. Ewald maintains that there is no proof that the author had any such derivation in mind. Still, the opinion of Josephus and the Targumists is entitled to some consideration. No satisfactory explanation of the terms “Bugaean” and “Agagite” has been discovered.

2. Bowing and prostrating—the verb בָּנַח means *to bow* or *to kneel*, and נִפְלַא to fall prostrate. This was the Oriental method of doing honor to a superior. But among the Persians—since the monarch was regarded as the incarnation of Ahura-Mazda, and therefore entitled to divine honors—the act of prostration before him was understood to imply worship or religious homage. Herodotus mentions certain Greeks who, on being introduced into the royal presence at Susa, and being pressed to prostrate themselves before the king, refused, alleging that “it was not their custom to worship a man, nor had they come for that purpose” (vii. 136). Plutarch relates that similar homage was required of Themistocles when he presented himself before the Persian king. And Curtius (Alexander the Great, viii. 11) says: “The Persians, indeed, not only from motives of piety, but also from prudence, worship their kings among the gods.” So that homage paid to Haman as the king's representative would be an indirect method of rendering divine honors to a human being. **The king commanded**—perhaps, as suggested elsewhere, Haman's notorious character or base origin may, in the judgment of the king, have rendered such a special command necessary. Otherwise the populace might have failed to pay homage to the new favorite. The Septuagint renders the last clause of the verse: “But Mardochaeus did not worship (προσεκύνει) him.”

3. Transgress—the Hebrew word עֲבֹד properly denotes *to pass over* or *beyond*, and hence corresponds precisely to the Latin *trans-*

said to Mordecai: Why dost thou transgress the king's command? ⁴ And it came to pass when they said this to him day after day and he did not listen to them, that they made it known to Haman to see whether the words of Mordecai would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

⁵ And Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow and prostrate himself before him; and Haman was filled with wrath. ⁶ Now it was despicable in his eyes to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had made known to him the people of Mordecai. And Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mor-

gredior, and our word "transgress." It is worthy of note that this verb עבר, in giving rise to the name "Hebrew," has impressed itself upon the people of Israel. In Gen. xiv. 13 Abram is for the first time designated as the "Hebrew," — עבר, literally, the *Over-man*, that is "the man who came over" [the river]; Septuagint περάντης, *the immigrant* (see Gesenius and Fuerst). Hence the name "Hebrew" always pointed back to the fact that the ancestors of that people had come from beyond the Euphrates.

4. **Words of Mordecai**—to see whether his plea, or excuse,—Jewish nationality,—would be accepted as valid. Certain Greeks were excused by the same king Xerxes, on somewhat similar grounds, from prostrating themselves before him (Herodotus, vii. 136); **that he was a Jew**—being such, he was precluded by the law of Moses from paying divine honors to a human being. Josephus evidently takes this view; for he puts into the mouth of Mordecai this prayer: "I did not worship him, nor could I endure to pay that honor to him which I used to pay to thee, O Lord." Besides, if Haman were known to be of the accursed race of Amalek (Deut. xxv. 17-19), that fact would, if possible, increase Mordecai's repugnance to the thought of paying him undue honors (see Discourses on the Book of Esther, by the Hebrew Club; "Mordecai").

6. **Despicable in his eyes**—he felt that the affront would not be sufficiently expiated by the slaughter of the offender alone. An insult offered to the grand vizier of the empire demanded the sacrifice of the entire race to which the culprit belonged. Nothing less would satiate Haman's vengeance, or soothe his wounded pride. The vengeance and the pride were alike vast and clamorous in their demands. A Jew had offered the insult, and the Jewish nation must pay the penalty.

decal, that were in all the kingdom of Xerxes. ⁷ In the first month, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of the king Xerxes they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

⁸ And Haman said to the king Xerxes: There is a certain

7. **The month Nisan** — this, according to the Babylonian method of reckoning, was the first month of the year. The former Hebrew name was Abib. It corresponded to the latter part of March and the early part of April, according to the most probable reckoning; **they cast** — rather, “one cast”; the verb is impersonal. Very likely, as Keil suggests, the casting was performed in Haman’s presence by some magician or astrologer who was skilled in such matters; **Pur, that is, the lot** — “Pur” is not properly a Hebrew, but a Persian, word; it corresponds to the Persian *pâre*, and to the Latin *pars*, and denotes *part, lot, fate*. The precise mode of “casting the lot” is not known. Have we a possible hint in Prov. xvi. 33? Among the ancients great attention was paid to lucky and unlucky days. No enterprise of importance was undertaken until a propitious day had been fixed upon. This was determined by various methods — by astrology, by inspecting the entrails of sacrificial victims, by watching the flight of birds, by casting the lot, and the like. In the present instance, Haman’s first care was to select a propitious day for the contemplated massacre. He seems to have first fixed upon the day of the month, namely, the thirteenth day. He then proceeded to determine the month itself, which turned out to be Adar, the last month of the year. He cast lots “from day to day, and from month to month”; that is, he tested the days of the month in succession — the first, the second, the third, and so on — until he hit upon the lucky day; and so in regard to the month. By a comparison of dates we find that he had an interval of some eleven months previous to the day of massacre in which to prepare for the execution of his bloody purpose. We cannot suppose that so long a delay was agreeable to his vengeful disposition; but his superstitious mind did not venture to strike the blow previous to the arrival of the day supposed to have been designated by the gods which he worshipped. That the divine hand, unknown to Haman, guided the lot, and arranged for the long interval in which the deliverance of the Jews might be wrought out, is certain.

8. **Dispersed and separate** — the first word relates to their disper-

people dispersed and separate among the peoples, in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are different from every people's, and the king's laws they do not keep ; therefore it is not fitting for the king to tolerate them. ⁹ If it seem good to the king, let it be decreed to destroy them ; and ten thousand talents of silver will I weigh into the hands of those who manage the business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries.

sion throughout the empire ; the second describes their isolated condition in that dispersion. They were not only scattered broadcast ; but they remained separate and distinct, not mingling with the other subjects of the king ; **the king's laws they do not keep** — this charge in the general sense was false. The Jews were, as a rule, loyal and peaceable subjects. The very spirit and genius of their law would lead them to obey rulers and all in authority ; **it is not fitting** — there may be some question whether the Hebrew word used here denotes moral fitness. The A.V. implies the negative ; but the best modern authorities seem to favor the affirmative. Still, it is doubtful whether moral considerations would have much weight with either Xerxes or Haman.

9. **If it seem good to the king** — the Hebrew word **טוֹב**, *good*, is employed with great latitude and variety of meaning, as including physical, mental, and moral good ; **decreed**, literally, *written*. It seems that royal decrees were written or recorded, so that they might not be misunderstood or tampered with ; **ten thousand talents** — this sum is variously estimated at from £1,875,000 to £3,750,000 sterling ; Palfrey says from ten millions to more than twenty millions of dollars (Lectures on the Jewish Scriptures and Antiquities, iv. 471). In proof of the wealth of some Persian subjects, Herodotus (vii. 28) mentions one Pythius, who offered to give the same Xerxes four millions of gold darics. Haman might have possessed even greater resources. **תְּלִטָּה**, rendered "talent," denotes primarily a circle or something round, then a mass of metal melted in a round form. This money may have been uncoined silver, passing by weight instead of by stamp. Yet it is well known that gold coins called "darics" were in use in the Persian empire previous to the time of Xerxes (Ezra ii. 69 ; Neh. vii. 71, 72) ; **I will weigh** — literally, *I will shekel* — the noun *shekel* coming from the same root as the verb here used. This looks as if the money was uncoined, and was to be weighed out or paid by weight. But the verb **may have lost**, to some extent, its pri-

¹⁰ Then the king removed his signet-ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the adversary of the Jews. ¹¹ And the king said to Haman : The silver is given to thee, and the people, to do with them as is pleasing in thine eyes.

¹² And the scribes of the king were called, in the first month, on the thirteenth day of it, and it was written according to all

many signification ; **manage the business**, literally, *doers of the business*, that is, probably, those who receive and disburse the king's funds — the royal financiers or treasurers.

10. Removed his signet-ring — that is, the ring containing the royal seal, which gave binding force to any document to which it was affixed. Some have supposed that, instead of being a ring, the signet was really a cylinder such as some of the Persian monarchs used. According to Rawlinson, the signet-cylinder of Darius is still preserved in the British Museum. In the case before us, however, the Hebrew word seems clearly to indicate a ring (see *Excursus on Signet-rings and Seals*). The royal signet was usually worn by the king's prime minister. When Haman was raised to that position, the ring was committed to him. So in the case of Mordecai (viii. 2) ; **adversary** — the Hebrew word implies more than a mere feeling of enmity ; it denotes one who is actively and effectively hostile — a persecutor — one who causes distress and straitness.

11. The silver is given to thee — this may have been merely an Oriental way of seeming to refuse, while actually accepting, the bribe offered by Haman. As this occurred subsequently to Xerxes' disastrous expedition against the Greeks, his treasury must have been in a very depleted condition, and the offer of such an immense sum of money would be peculiarly tempting. More probably the meaning is : The silver of the Jews — their property — and the people themselves are given to thee. If so, the king simply announced the confiscation of the Jews' property, and its assignment to Haman. We are told that in the East the goods of those who are put to death escheat to the ruler, who either seizes them for his own use or else makes a grant of them to some favorite.

12. The scribes of the king — these persons were generally in readiness at the court to draw up edicts and to do any other writing which the king might require ; **satraps** — Hebrew אַחֲשְׁרָפִים, corresponding to the Persian *khshatrapa*, or the Greek *σαρπάτης*. The

that Haman commanded, to the satraps of the king, and to the pashas who were in all the provinces, and to the princes of the people of each province according to its writing, and to every people according to its tongue. In the name of the king Xerxes was it written, and it was sealed with the king's signet-ring. ¹³ And letters were sent by the hand of couriers into every province of the king:

satrap, or supreme civil governor of each department, was "charged with the collection and transmission of the revenue, the administration of justice, the maintenance of order, and the general supervision of the territory." Each satrap was appointed by the king, and removable at pleasure, but while in office was despotic, as being the representative of the Great King. (See Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, iii. 418.) In the time of Darius the Mede, there were one hundred and twenty of these officials (Dan. vi. 2, in Hebrew text). According to Herodotus (iii. 89), Darius Hystaspis constituted twenty governments, which were known as "satrapies." This number seems to have varied, at different times, from twenty to twenty-nine. (Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, iii. 418, Note.) How is this apparent discrepancy to be resolved? According to Herodotus, the division of the empire into twenty departments was made for the express purpose of *taxation*, the raising of a revenue. In this division, proximity and similarity of language seem to have been disregarded; nations were grouped so that the money could be extorted most readily. In the division mentioned in Esther i. 1, the various nations are distributed according to geographical and ethnological lines, "according to the races inhabiting the different provinces" (Keil). This hypothesis obviates the difficulty; *pashas* — Hebrew, *רִנְפָא*; Sanscrit, *paksha*; Assyrian, *pakha*. These were inferior officials ruling the subdivisions of the provinces. (See on viii. 9); **princes** — the native princes, or head men among the conquered races, who were allowed some share in the government. (See as above.) **In the name of the king** — every edict, in order to be binding, must be issued in the king's name, and sealed with the king's seal (Herodotus iii. 128).

13. The Persian system of conveying letters and other messages by means of relays of fresh horses kept in readiness at suitable distances along the route, is fully described in Xenophon's Cyropaedia, viii. 6, sec. 17, and Herodotus viii. 98. (See also Excursus D.: The Letters and Posts of the Ancients.) The latter part of this verse, printed in small capitals, seems to be a verbatim quotation from the king's decree

TO DESTROY, TO KILL, AND TO CAUSE TO PERISH ALL THE JEWS, BOTH YOUNG AND OLD, LITTLE CHILDREN AND WOMEN, IN ONE DAY, ON THE THIRTEENTH OF THE TWELFTH MONTH, THAT IS, THE MONTH ADAR ; AND [TAKE] THEIR PROPERTY FOR SPOIL.

¹⁴ *A copy of the writing to be given as a decree in every province, published to all the peoples, that they should be ready for that day.*

¹⁵ The couriers went forth, pressed on by the command of the king ; and the decree was given in Shushan the castle. And the king and Haman sat down to drink ; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

of extermination. From Herodotus (iii. 119), and other authorities, we gather that it was the custom of the Persians and other ancient nations to put to death not only criminals themselves, but also their wives and children with them. **Their property for spoil** — Ewald (Hist. of Israel, Vol. v. 233, Note 5) calls attention to the “noble contrast” between the purposed rapacity of Haman and the forbearance of the Jews (see chap. ix. 10, 15, 16) ; and is forcibly reminded of the inscription, “Property is sacred,” on the shops of the Paris, Berlin, and Frankfort revolutionists.

14. This verse we take to be the certification of the scribe to the authenticity and correctness of the foregoing excerpt from the royal decree. It seems equivalent to the expression : “A true copy — Attest,” which we see appended to modern documents. See a somewhat similar attestation in Ezra iv. 11 ; vii. 11.

15. **Pressed on by the command** — why such haste, since some ten or eleven months must elapse after the decree had been promulgated in the remotest provinces before it would be put in execution ? Some suppose that Haman and the king wished to give the Jews opportunity to escape. This, however, seems improbable. Others think that Haman feared lest, in case of delay, the king might waver or change his mind. Or that the king wished to get the matter irrevocably settled and off his hands, so as to think no more about it. **The king and Haman sat down to drink** — what stolid, heartless brutality have we here ! After having condemned an innocent people to die, the king and Haman betake themselves to the wine-cup, and to their drunken orgies. We are reminded of what Suetonius relates of Nero, that clad in theatrical garb, and looking forth from the tower of Maecenas upon the burning

IV. ¹When Mordecai knew all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went forth into the midst of the city and cried out with a great and bitter cry. ²And he came even before the king's gate; for it was not allowed to enter the king's gate in clothing of sackcloth. ³And in every province, wherever the word of the king and his decree came, there was great lamentation among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and sackcloth and ashes were made the bed of many.

Rome kindled by his own hand, being pleased with the beauty of the flame, he chanted over and over the “Fall of Troy.” **Perplexed**—the Jews no doubt had shown themselves a quiet, industrious, well-disposed people. They had gained many friends. Besides, the extermination of a whole people by such arbitrary slaughter must have seemed, as it was in reality, *a dangerous precedent*. Who could tell what people or race would next fall under the king's ban? No wonder that the capital was “perplexed.” And how terribly laconic the latter word!

CHAP. IV. 1. **Knew** — A. V. *perceived*. The matter may have transpired through the publication of the edict; or possibly the king's scribes had mentioned it to other officials of the court, and so it had become known throughout the palace before the edict appeared. **Rent his clothes; put on sackcloth and ashes** — each act expressive of grief, together indicating intense anguish. **Went forth** — perhaps from his house. Rawlinson thinks he quitted the environs of the palace, and went forth into the city. It was not allowable to exhibit signs of mourning within the palace. **Cried out** — literally, *cried a cry great and bitter*. Orientals are much more demonstrative in expressing emotion than are Occidentals. The former smite their breasts, tear their hair and their garments, and utter loud and piercing cries, in token of grief. (See Discourses on the Book of Esther, by the Hebrew Club: “Mourning and its Expression.”)

2. In his distress and alarm, Mordecai turned his steps toward the palace, possibly with some indefinite purpose of seeking audience with the king, or more probably with the hope of enlisting Esther's sympathy and assistance. His somber attire, however, debarred him from entering the king's gate.

3. **Were made the bed of many** — literally, *were spread as a bed for many*. Many persons caused ashes to be strewed upon the ground,

4 Then the maids of Esther and her eunuchs came and told her. And the queen was exceedingly grieved; and she sent garments to put upon Mordecai, and [bade] to remove his sack-cloth from him. But he did not receive [them].

5 Then Esther called for Hatach, from among the eunuchs of the king, whom he had caused to stand before her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, in order to learn what this was, and wherefore it was. **6** And Hatach went forth to Mordecai into the square of the city, which is before the king's gate. **7** And Mordecai told him all that had befallen him, and the amount of silver which Haman promised to weigh into the treasuries of the king on account of the Jews—for their

and then putting on the coarse hair-cloth garment, either sat or lay upon the couch of ashes. (Compare Isa. lviii. 5). As the sorrowful news respecting the edict spread throughout the empire many of the Jews followed the example of Mordecai, and assumed the “garb of woe.” So terror and distress pervaded the kingdom wherever Jews were found.

4. The retinue of an Oriental queen would comprise not only maid-servants, but also eunuchs whose duty it would be to do errands and convey messages at her pleasure. Though these attendants might not be aware of Esther's nationality, they knew of her regard for Mordecai, and her interest in his welfare. Hence, they tell her of his sorrow. **Exceedingly grieved**—her grief and alarm were intense, almost *convulsive*—so the word seems to imply. The thought of her beloved kinsman in such a plight of woe was extremely distressing. With the view to console and reassure him she sends him a change of raiment, desiring him to substitute it for the sable garb he was wearing. The offer is declined, and the messengers return to their royal mistress.

5. With increasing anxiety the queen despatches a special messenger to learn the cause and meaning of Mordecai's alarming and extraordinary demonstrations of grief.

6. **The square**—a broad, open space, the Greek *πλατεῖα*, an area in front of the king's gate.

7. Mordecai had learned all the particulars respecting the bargain between the king and Haman. The immense sum of money promised by Haman is mentioned by Mordecai in order to impress upon Esther's mind a sense of Haman's eagerness and determination to extirpate the Jews. Their enemy is willing to pay this immense sum, in order to have the opportunity of glutting his vengeance.

destruction. ⁸ And a copy of the written decree which was given in Shushan to destroy them he gave him to show to Esther, and [charged him] to explain to her, and to enjoin upon her to go to the king in order to make supplication to him and to entreat before him for her people.

⁹ And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

¹⁰ And Esther spoke to Hatach and gave him a message to Mordecai : ¹¹ All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that, for every man or woman who shall approach the king, into the inner court uncalled, his law is invariable — to put him to death ; except only him to whom the king shall extend the golden sceptre that he may live. And I have not been called to go to the king these thirty days.

8. In order to impress the queen further with a sense of the imminent peril, Mordecai sends a copy of the royal decree, for her inspection. At the same time he enjoins upon her the duty of interceding with the king for the preservation of her people. This injunction must have disclosed to Hatach Esther's nationality, even if it were previously unknown to him. No doubt the royal scribes, writing at the monarch's dictation, produced a considerable number of copies of the edict at the same time, so that Mordecai would have no difficulty in procuring a copy to send to Esther.

9, 10. **Hatach**, — or transliterated from the Hebrew, IIathak, — seems to have been the queen's trusted and confidential messenger, selected, no doubt, on account of his well-known integrity. "We are not in so many words told that he was honest and true, but we instinctively feel it, and we see that it is involved in the narrative. The queen begins to be in sore trouble. The darkness is deepening. Some unknown but dire calamity is near. 'Send me IIatach — I need my truest and my best — that I may know what it is, and why it is, and what may be done to prepare for, or avert the evil day.'" (Alexander Raleigh, D.D., "The Book of Esther," p. 99.)

11. Esther adduces an apparently insuperable objection. It seems that the palace had an outer and an inner court. Whoever, without being summoned, intruded into the inner court was, according to a well-known law, put to death, unless the monarch, as an act of clemency, extended his golden sceptre toward the intruder, in which case the law did not apply. Esther had not been summoned into the king's

12 And they told Mordecai the words of Esther.

13 And Mordecai commanded to answer Esther : Think not in thy soul to escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. **14** For if thou art wholly silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise to the Jews from another place, but thou wilt perish and thy father's house. And who knoweth whether for a time like this thou hast attained to the kingdom ?

presence for thirty days, hence she hesitated to present herself. According to chap. vi. ver. 4, 5, and Herodotus iii. 140, any man might present himself in the *outer court*, and seek and await audience with the king. Why did not Esther avail herself of this privilege? To this question we reply : 1. It might have been deemed an unseemly thing for *the queen* to present herself in the manner of a common suppliant. For her to do this might have deeply offended her capricious and despotic lord. 2. She might have been unwilling to approach the monarch in the customary manner, since in that case she would be required to make known without delay the cause which had prompted her to seek the interview. This she did not wish to do at the outset, until she had propitiated the king. 3. It may be that *women were not allowed in the outer court* at all. In that case she would be cut off from access to the royal presence by that way. Or there may have been some special regulation for the government of the king's household, which was not applicable to the people of the realm generally. As to the "**golden sceptre**," see Notes on v. 2, and viii. 4; also *Excursus on the Golden Sceptre*.

13. Think not in thy soul — do not entertain the idea that thy residence in the king's palace will serve to protect thee ; thou shalt share the fate of thy people.

14. Relief — literally, *roominess or breathing-space*. Mordecai is confident that deliverance will come from some quarter ; the great, unnamed Power which has so long watched over the Israelitish nation, will rescue them from the snares of the destroyer. Though many — Esther and her family among them — would perish in the impending conflict, yet the Jews, *as a people*, would survive. **Who knoweth whether** — a very timely and suggestive intimation that Providence had, perhaps, raised Esther to the throne for this very juncture, — for the express purpose of effecting through her the salvation of her beloved nation. The patriotic heart of the young Jewess responded at once to the suggestion.

¹⁵ Then Esther commanded to answer Mordecai : ¹⁶ Go, assemble all the Jews found in Shushan, and fast ye for me ; and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day ; I also and my maidens will fast likewise. And thus will I go to the king, which is not according to the law ; and if I perish, I perish.

¹⁷ And Mordecai went away, and did according to all that Esther commanded him.

V. ¹ And it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's house, in front of the king's house ; and the king was sitting upon the royal throne in the royal house, opposite the entrance to the

16. **Fast ye for me** — of course, the idea of supplication to God for the success of her attempt is *implied* in the strongest manner. (See *Excursus on Fasting*.) **Three days** — the actual time need not have been much more than thirty-six hours, if we reckon — according to the well-known Jewish method — from the evening of the first to the morning of the third day, and counting the two days named (compare *Mark viii. 31*; *Luke ix. 22*). **If I perish, I perish** — this is not the expression of sullen despondency, but of self-sacrificing courage, ready to do its duty and abide the consequences, be they what they may.

17. From his connection with the royal household, no doubt well-known to the Jews in the capital, Mordecai would obviously possess sufficient influence among his people to induce them to assemble ; to say nothing of the command of the queen to the same effect.

CHAP. V. 1. **The third day** — i.e. reckoning from the day when Haman's plot was made known to the queen. **Royal apparel** — this marks the change from her garb of fasting, and equally her care that nothing should be neglected that might favor the success of her errand. **Inner court** — this implies an outer court which was accessible to messengers from all parts of the kingdom ; to the great officers of state, and to all who had any special business with the king, except the royal household. For the latter, the queen included, the access must be by the inner court. (See note, chap. vi. 4; and *Excursus on the Topography and Buildings*.) It is probable that she entered the **inner court** from a larger domestic court [see *Excursus*] that communicated with the building or apartment which she occupied ; and by a door which was not in sight from the throne-room. Having entered this **inner court**,

house. ² And it came to pass that when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, she found favor in his eyes; and the king extended to Esther the golden sceptre which was in his hand. And Esther approached, and touched the top of the sceptre. ³ And the king said to her: What for thee, Queen

she came and stood in that part of it upon which the throne-room opened by an avenue of pillars. As the king sat upon his throne, the two were face to face, though separated by a considerable distance. It was a critical moment. No one but God could tell what whim of the monarch would be in the ascendant then. It was something that he looked upon a winning face. “It is a constant fact in nature that the sight of a face will do what nothing else can do in the way of awakening love, touching sympathy, securing trust, and evoking help. If I am seeking a good thing, my face ought to be better than the face of another for the getting of it. Personal presence is a power that nothing else can equal. And for helpfulness in any kind of difficulty we have all a King to go to.” (Raleigh.) While Esther did not overlook the importance of going in person to urge her suit, she did not forget that profounder fact that “the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord.”

2. The golden sceptre — we have many delineations of Persian and Babylonian sceptre-bearers, copied from the old sculptured slabs that have been exhumed during the last half century. The sceptre, as thus represented, is described as “an instrument like a stick with a



rosette ornament at one end and a loop at the other.” In some of the representations we seem to detect a vague resemblance to a human head. There may be an allusion to this in the statement that Esther touched the head (אֶת־רְאשָׁה) of the sceptre. From the dimensions, as very uniformly shown, it is clear that it could not have been of solid gold. This would have made it so heavy as to be unwieldy. It would require more muscular exertion than Xerxes would be willing to put forth, to hold out an instrument weighing thirty pounds, till the queen could pass the whole width of the throne-room to touch it. Xenophon tells us that three hundred sceptre-bearers, richly dressed, attended the elder Cyrus on every occasion. (See on iv. 11; also Excursus on the Golden Sceptre.)

3. What for thee? — This is entirely literal, and well exhibits the

Esther ? and what thy request ? even to half of the kingdom, [ask] and it shall be granted thee.

4 And Esther answered : If it seem good to the king, let the king and Haman come this day to the banquet which I have prepared for him.

5 And the king commanded : Hasten Haman to perform the word of Esther. And the king and Haman went to the banquet which Esther had prepared. 6 And the king said to Esther at the banquet of wine : What is thy petition ? and it shall be granted thee ; and what is thy request ? even to half of the kingdom, [ask] and it shall be done.

spirit of the scene. **What for thee, Queen Esther, and what thy request ? Even to half the kingdom, (ask) and it shall be granted thee** — the conjunction **'** repeated in the same connection in ver. 6, makes it evident that some word equivalent to *ask* must be supplied. The high sounding magnificence of Oriental promises is well illustrated here. (See also Mark vi. 23.)

4. Banquet — See note, i. 5. The king understood that this invitation to a banquet, couched in the form of a request, was simply preliminary to some petition of greater importance. This was in accordance with Oriental usage. “In presenting a request to a superior, it is extremely common to begin with an outlying, subordinate matter, and have the answer, the argument, or the battle over that. If the petition is received favorably, it will be easy to ask a little more, and so on up to the thing really desired. Thus the entire matter is not compromised, nor either the petitioner or the petitioned committed finally, by the first refusal. Of course the one petitioned often sees through the whole from the start; but on the one hand it is a form, and on the other hand it is a useful form — two good reasons for keeping it up. Sometimes the petitioned cuts short the petitioner at the start, and goes on from his own intuition to grant the whole desired favor. An ancient example of the opposite course may be seen in 1 Kings ii. 13–25.” (Prof. Isaac H. Hall, in Sunday-School Times for July 9, 1881.)

5. Hasten Haman — this is not addressed to Haman for he was not present. The verb is transitive, and Haman is the object. It was a precept enjoining alacrity. Give notice at once to Haman, that he may be in season. We might render, Cause Haman to hasten.

⁷ And Esther replied and said : My petition and my request — ⁸ If I have found favor in the eyes of the king, and if it seem good to the king to grant my petition and perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet which I will prepare for them ; and to-morrow I will do according to the word of the king.

⁹ And Haman went forth on that day joyful and glad of heart. But when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, and that he neither rose up nor moved on account of him, Haman was filled with wrath towards Mordecai. ¹⁰ But Haman restrained himself, and went to his house. And he sent and

7, 8. The queen's reply began with a broken sentence. The thought of the immense issues that were depending on her words may well have caused some fluttering of the nerves, and some hesitancy and confusion of speech. She began as though she were about to declare the whole burden that was upon her soul. It is not impossible that such was her intention. There are supreme moments when great wisdom comes in an instantaneous flash of thought. A glance of the eye may have given her a sense of the situation, that led her to change her intention upon the instant that the word **request** fell from her lips. Whatever the process of thought, she saw that her best hope was in delay. And so she proposes a similar banquet on the morrow, with the promise that she will then make a full disclosure of that which she has upon her heart. Whence came that wisdom ? We cannot well doubt, in the light of what immediately follows, that an unseen guide was leading her in a way that she knew not.

9, 10. Leaving the king and the queen, the narrative now passes to Haman. The signal honor which he has received from the queen elates him, and fills him with a selfish delight. But in a moment the whole tide of his feelings is changed. Passing the propylon, he sees Mordecai sitting unmoved as a statue, and withholding the homage that is rendered him by others, and his equanimity is sadly disturbed. He feels the rising impulse to speak out his indignation, or to take satisfaction on the spot. But he restrains himself. With difficulty he curbs the rising passion till he reaches his home, where he may take counsel of his friends, and of Zeresh his wife. He sends for them, and the substance of his harangue is given.

brought in his friends and Zeresh his wife. ¹¹ And Haman recounted to them the glory of his riches and the multitude of his sons, and everything wherein the king had honored him, and wherein he had exalted him above the princes and servants of the king. ¹² And Haman said : Yea, more — Esther the queen brought in with the king to the banquet which she had prepared no one but myself ; and also for the morrow am I invited to her with the king ; ¹³ but all this is no satisfaction to me so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting in the king's gate.

¹⁴ And Zeresh his wife and all his friends said to him : Let a tree be made fifty cubits high ; and in the morning speak thou to the king, and let Mordecai be impaled on it ; then go thou with the king to the banquet rejoicing.

And the thing seemed good to Haman, and he caused the tree to be made.

11. **The multitude of his sons** — we have no other word than **multitude** to meet the case ; yet it is not quite the word we want. It fails by excess. Ten men (see chap. ix. 7-10) fall very far short of our idea of a multitude. Yet relatively, i.e. as sons in a single family, they were many ; and this, as things went in that day, was no inconsiderable element of prosperity and strength.

13. **No satisfaction** — this is none too strong. He emphasizes the *nothingness* that he finds in all the good fortune to which he points. A single ingredient of bitterness has poisoned the whole. True, he has no doubt that the king's decree already enacted will sweep away Mordecai by and by. But how can he wait ? The misery of the situation will consume him.

14. His counsellors have a speedy remedy ; and the preparation may begin at once. **A tree be made fifty cubits high** — it is not necessary to suppose that the stake or pole for the impalement was to be made of this length. We have representations of the simple structure (see *Excursus on Early Modes of Execution*) which they doubtless had in mind, consisting of a stake fixed in a movable base or pedestal. And this set upon some roof, tower, or other elevation already existing in his grounds, with the addition, if necessary, of a temporary scaffold, would meet all the demands of the text. The elevation would bring the execution fully into public view, and settle the case against any similar offence from any quarter. He would need to

VI. ¹On that night the king's sleep fled, and he commanded to bring in the book of records of the daily affairs ; and they were being read before the king. ²And there was found written what Mordecai had told against Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, of the keepers of the entrance, who sought to lay hands on the king Xerxes. ²And the king said : What

strike but once. The preparation does not wait for the king's sentence. This was regarded as in no degree doubtful. The carpenters are put to their work without delay ; and it begins to be understood in Shushan (see chap. vii. 9) what the unusual demonstration means.

CHAP. VI. 1. **On that night** — the Hebrew makes the time very definite ; that very night, i.e. the night immediately following the day of the queen's banquet, and of Haman's conference with Zeresh and his friends just narrated. **The king's sleep fled** — this is literal ; a bold figure ! The king cannot command his own sleep. It is common to speak of the "loss of sleep," as though we had lost something appointed for us, and so properly our own. To Xerxes it seemed like the escape and flight of a fickle servant that he could not pursue. It was not an event that was in any way surprising or worthy of special notice, except as connected in the chain of events. In this connection it was vital, and gave token of the ordering of the divine hand. **Book of records** — literally, *book of remembrances*, or remembrance book. We have the same words, lacking only the plural form, in Mal. iii. 16. The book which the king ordered to be brought was that which is spoken of in chap. ii. 23, the book in which the diary of the empire was kept. (See Ezra iv. 15, 19. "Historiographers were attached to the Persian court, and attended the monarch wherever he went. We find them noting down facts for Xerxes at Doriscus (Herod. vii. 100), and again at Salamis (Herod. viii. 90). They kept a record something like the *acta diurna* of the early Roman empire (Tacit. Ann. xiii. 31), and specially noted whatever concerned the king. Ctesias pretended to have drawn his Persian history from the Chronicles." — Rawlinson.)

2. **What Mordecai had told** — it is evident that the substance of the information he gave was recorded. The record was sufficiently circumstantial and vivid to make a deep impression on the king's mind. **Bigthan**, or more correctly **Bigthana**. The third syllable of this name, found here, does not appear in chapter ii. ver. 21.

3. The king felt that some fit acknowledgment of such an act of

honor and distinction have been conferred upon Mordecai for this?

And the king's young men, his ministers, replied: Nothing has been done for him.

* And the king said: Who is in the court?

Now Haman had come into the outer court of the king's house to request the king to impale Mordecai on the tree which he had set up for him.

fidelity was due to his own interests. Beyond question it was called for by precedents which many about him would bring to mind. ("It was a settled principle of the Persian government that 'Royal Benefactors' were to receive an adequate reward. The names of such persons were placed on a special roll (Herod. viii. 85), and great care was taken that they should be properly recompensed. (See Herod. iii. 140; v. 11; viii. 85; Thucyd. i. 138; Xen. Hel. iii. 1 and 6, etc.). It is a mistake, however, to suppose (Davidson) that they were always rewarded at once. Themistocles was inscribed on the list B.C. 480, but did not obtain a reward till B.C. 465. Other benefactors waited for months (Herod. v. 11), or perhaps years (Herod. i. 107), before they were recompensed. Sometimes a benefactor seems to have received no reward at all (Herod. iii. 138)." —Rawlinson.) No less would the instinct that led him to provide for his own future safety demand it. Who would take the risk of shielding him from a second peril, if this should pass unrewarded? The form of the narrative is almost dramatic. Written in the style of the modern drama, it would read — *Xerxes*: What honor and distinction have been rendered to Mordecai for this? *Ministers*: Nothing has been done for him. *Xerxes*: Who is in the court? *Ministers*: Behold Haman is standing in the court. *Xerxes*: Let him come in. [Enter Haman.] What shall be done to the man in whose honor the king delights? *Haman* [Aside; To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself?]: The man in whose honor the king delights, let them bring, etc. *Xerxes*: Hasten, take the apparel, and the horse as thou hast said, etc. [Scene at Haman's house]. *Zeresh, and the wise men*: If Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews, then thou shalt utterly fall before him. Certainly no drama ever crowded more into so narrow a compass.

4. Outer Court — absolute certainty as to the location of the outer and inner courts of the palace of Xerxes at Susa is in the present state of our knowledge unattainable. But by comparing what is told us

⁵ And the king's young men said to him : Behold, Haman is standing in the court.

And the king said : Let him come in.

⁶ And Haman came in ; and the king said to him : What shall be done for the man in whose honor the king delights ?

And Haman said in his heart : To whom would the king delight to do honor more than to myself ? ⁷ Then Haman said to the king : For the man in whose honor the king delights, ⁸ let them bring the royal apparel with which the king clothes himself, and the horse upon which the king rides, and the crown royal which is worn upon his head ; ⁹ and let the ap-

(1 Kings vii. 1-12) of the royal buildings erected by Solomon at Jerusalem, the foundations uncovered by Botta at Khorsabad, the ruins of Persepolis, and finally those that have been laid open at Susa, we arrive at conclusions that give us what is certainly a possible and very intelligible explanation of the difficult points connected with the subject. The outer court, which opened the palace to the approach of the public officers and messengers of the king, was subject to no such restriction as that which was laid upon the inner court, or court of the harem (iv. 11). It was in view from the throne, though the larger portion of it was seen obliquely across the intercolumnar spaces. (See Excursus on the Topography and Buildings.) It is probable that the king discovered a movement on the part of the guards at the propylon that showed that some officer of distinction had arrived, and at the same time caught a glimpse of Haman himself, but not with sufficient clearness to be sure that it was he. It has been supposed by some that the king asked the question, **Who is in the court**, without any such discovery ; having a right to assume that some one or more of his ministers would be at that time in the court. It is certainly an objection to this, that Haman's presence there does not seem to have been anticipated by the king, and would not have occurred but for his speacial errand. Moreover, the king's inquiry should have been, on this theory, *not* Who is in the court ? but Is there any one in the court ? Not וְ but וּ should have been used. (See 2 Sam. ix. 3 ; 2 Kings xviii. 33 ; Prov. vi. 28 ; Jer. xxiii. 24.)

8. Let them bring, etc.—Haman is here shown to be a man of great readiness and versatility. True, his inventive powers were quickened by the spur of personal ambition, and the thought of the

parel and the horse be given to the hand of one of the king's noblest princes; and let them array the man in whose honor the king delights, and cause him to ride on the horse in the public square of the city, and proclaim before him: Thus shall it be done for the man in whose honor the king delights.

¹⁰ And the king said to Haman: Hasten, take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do so to Mordecai the Jew who sits in the king's gate; let not a word fail of all that thou hast said.

¹¹ And Haman took the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and caused him to ride on the horse in the public square of the city, and proclaimed before him: Thus shall it be done for the man in whose honor the king delights.

¹² And Mordecai returned to the king's gate.

But Haman hastened to his house, dejected and with his head covered. ¹³ And Haman recounted to Zeresh his wife and to all his friends everything that had befallen him.

highest honors he could devise concentrated upon himself. But he was not thrown from his balance. His ruling passion held him true to himself. He made the most of his opportunity; he pushed the privilege of the moment to its utmost limit.

10. Do so to Mordecai — probably no more sudden or chilling reverse ever befell any mortal. Not only does his charming vision of the highest earthly glory to which he could aspire collapse at a breath, but his sweet dream of revenge is gone; and worse than all, the magnificent demonstration which he had devised for himself all goes under his own superintendence to the honor of him whom he hated most of all men, and for whom he had been contriving a doom of shame and of death. This sudden check to the flow of his spirits led him to imagine something deeper than the king intended.

12. His head covered — he went through the required demonstration, doubtless, as became a great minister of state upon whom a thousand eyes were turned. But when he had escaped from public gaze, he could command himself no longer. He felt that he must hide his tell-tale countenance from those he would meet, till he reached the ~~asylum~~ of sympathy which he would find in his home.

13. Hast begun to fall — his counsellors, and even his wife, have

And his wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him : If Mordecai, before whom thou hast begun to fall, be of the race of the Jews, thou shalt not prevail over him, but thou shalt utterly fall before him.

¹⁴ While they were yet talking with him, the king's eunuchs approached, and hastened to bring Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

VII. ¹ And the king and Haman came to drink with Esther the queen. ² And the king said to Esther, on the second day also, at the banquet of wine : What is thy petition, queen Esther ? and it shall be granted thee ; and what is thy request ? even to half of the kingdom, [ask] and it shall be performed.

³ Then Esther the queen answered and said : If I have found favor in thine eyes, O king, and if it seem good to the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my

no prop for him in his adversity. Their words have the effect, rather, of an additional impulse downward. No less than three changes are rung by them on that word *fall*. “Thou hast begun to fall, falling, thou shalt fall before him”—so, when literally rendered. How different their language from that with which they cheered him on his way to the former banquet of the queen.

14. The king's eunuchs are at hand to escort him to Esther's second banquet. He goes not “rejoicing” (see chap. v. 14), but with a death-knell ringing in his ear.

CHAP. VII. 1. **To drink** — it was a banquet of wine. Now let Haman drink, and forget the dark cloud that had come over him. Who can tell what new turn of affairs may render all bright again, and help him on to the accomplishment of his desire. The queen's request will come first ; what if it should prepare the way for his ? Twenty-four hours often produced great changes in the determinations of Xerxes. “The Persians,” says Ebers, “always reflected in the morning, when sober, on the resolutions formed the night before, while drunk” (Egyptian Princess, Preface, p. 8). All is fair ; the queen smiles as sweetly, and the king is as gracious as yesterday. How can any deadly bolt break forth from such a sky ? Their hearts grow merry, and the king renews his promise to Esther, and bids her **as before ask, even to half of the kingdom.**

request ; ⁴ for we are sold, I and my people, to destroy [us], to kill [us], and to cause [us] to perish. Yet if we had been sold for bondmen and for bondwomen, I had kept silent — although the adversary could not compensate for the king's damage.

⁵ And the king Xerxes answered and said to Esther the queen : Who is this, and where is he, whose heart has filled him to do thus ?

⁶ And Esther said : The man, adversary, and enemy, is this wicked Haman.

Now Haman was terrified in the presence of the king and the queen.

⁷ And the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine [and went] into the garden of the palace.

3, 4. My life, and my people — the queen's lips are unsealed now, and three hot glowing sentences will tell the whole. **Sold, destroy, kill, perish** — the very words of Haman's infamous decree ! **Compensate** — literally, “the enemy could not be even, or level with,” i.e. up to the level of, **the king's damage**. Let the enemy exhaust all his resources, and the king would still be a loser.

5. Who is this? — the king is evidently aroused. The words of Esther have gone home to the mark. He throws out his pronouns in a wild confusion of excitement, and then repeats them with the order inverted. “Who is he, that one — and where is that one, he, whose heart has filled him (with the audacity) to do so?” — it is clear that the identification cannot wait. It must be prompt and unmistakable. And the queen is equal to the demand.

6. The man, adversary, etc. — the queen's blood is up. She sees her advantage ; and she speaks with all the vehemence of one who has deeply felt the monstrous injustice of Haman's plot. The collocation of the words in the Hebrew leaves no doubt that they were accompanied with a gesture of the hand ; her scorn and righteous indignation flashed out, as it were, at her very finger's-end, as she pointed to him. “The man, adversary, and enemy, is Haman, the wretch, this (one).” Well might he be terror-stricken in that presence. He reads, in the king's countenance and in his movements, the angry excitement that has taken possession of him.

7. His wrath — a great heat of excitement enkindled by this

And Haman stood to plead with the queen Esther for his life ; for he saw that the evil was determined against him by the king.

⁸ And the king returned from the garden of the palace to the hall of the banquet of wine, and Haman was falling upon the couch on which Esther was. And the king said : Will he also force the queen, with me in the house ? The command went forth from the mouth of the king, and they covered the face of Haman.

⁹ And Harbonah, one of the eunuchs before the king, said : Behold also the tree, which Haman made for Mordecai who spoke [what was] good for the king, stands at the house of Haman, fifty cubits high.

And the king said : Impale him on it.

sudden and unlooked for development. It was not wholly wrath, but a complex feeling consisting in part of disappointment and chagrin that his favorite minister should be caught in such a blunder, and such a crime ; in part of a disquieting sense of his own thoughtless complicity in the plot ; and in part of a just indignation at the magnitude and atrocity of the intended massacre. *Garden of the palace* — properly, the garden of the Great Hall, or garden of the Béthan. (See on chap. i. 5 ; also Excursus on Topography and Buildings.) Xerxes leaves the banquet-hall for a moment that he may become sufficiently the master of himself to know how to act. Haman seizes the moment to implore the favor of the queen to avert the extreme sentence of death. Already his case has become desperate. If only his life may be spared, he asks no more ; and even this he presumes not to ask from the king. He prefers the chance of appealing to the queen.

8. Was falling, etc. — in his extreme perturbation he hardly knew what he did. We may suppose that having failed to obtain any sign of help from Esther, he gave himself up to a frenzy of despair, and in bowing low before her, seemed to the king at the first glimpse he caught of him, to deserve the bitter insinuation to which he gave vent. This was followed by the command (*תְּצַדֵּק* is rendered *commandment* no less than eight times in the A.V., in the Book of Esther), to cover Haman's face in token of his doom.

9. Behold the tree, etc. — Harbonah was quick to discern the king's mood, and to see that this was just the fuel that the fire required. In

¹⁰ And they impaled Haman on the tree which he had set up for Mordecai. And the wrath of the king subsided.

VIII. ¹On that very day the king Xerxes gave to the queen Esther the house of Haman, the adversary of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had made known

form, his words were only an appendix to the dark insinuation of Xerxes, and a further justification of the doom he had pronounced. But he well knew that the king would turn them to other account. It was a covert suggestion. **Impale him on it** — this was as Harbonah anticipated. No time was lost. Haman was hurried away to execution; and his own apparatus of death, lifted high in the air, on his own grounds to give effect to the punishment he intended for Mordecai, exhibited in the view of all the people his own lifeless body instead. The Persians saw in this another illustration of the fickleness of fortune, and of the sudden reverses that so often befell the men in power; the Jews saw a gracious answer to prayer, a striking manifestation of the providence of God who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

10. **Wrath subsided** — see note ver. 7. It was a relief to Xerxes to have done *something* that the case required. He was willing for the moment to believe that he had done enough. The heat of his tempestuous excitement, finding vent in the execution of Haman, was abated. In his calmer mood he could be approached again.

CHAP. VIII. 1. **On that very day** — when the downfall of Haman began, it rushed to a speedy conclusion. Calamities come in clusters. Justice seems often to be long collecting her forces; but when the retribution begins, it falls like an avalanche. So it was in Haman's case. On the very day that he was impaled, his house, i.e. his whole estate, which we suppose was princely, passed over into the hands of one of the people whose ruin he had sought to compass. **The adversary of the Jews** — the Hebrew language discriminates carefully between *enemy* and *adversary*. An “enemy,” בּוֹנֵד, is one whose heart is full of evil purposes, longings, designs towards another; an “adversary,” בּוֹנֵץ, is one who enters upon active operations against another. The former refers more to the mental state, the latter to the conduct. Haman was both the enemy and adversary of the Jews. (See iii. 10; vii. 6; ix. 1, 10.) **Mordecai came before the king** — he before this was sitting in the gate of the king, i.e. he was a courtier in the palace. (See on chap. ii. 19.) Now he is elevated from the position of courtier,

what he was to her. ²And the king took off his signet-ring which he had withdrawn from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai. And Esther placed Mordecai over the house of Haman. ³And Esther continued and spoke before the king, and fell at his feet and wept, and besought him to avert the evil of Haman

or royal judge, to be grand vizier, or premier in the empire. He could now come before the king — i.e. enter his immediate presence, and transact business with him face to face. Daniel had occupied a similar position in the government of Darius (Dan. vi. 2). What he was to her — he was her cousin. She was Mordecai's uncle's daughter (ii. 7). [May not the expression, "what he was to her," involve more than the idea of mere *relationship*? May it not include the kindness and tender care which he had bestowed upon her in her orphanage and loneliness? Not only was he her cousin; he was her guardian and guide and foster-parent as well. The knowledge of the manner in which he had befriended the queen could hardly fail to predispose the king in his favor. The fact that the *verb* is wanting in the original, may allow some latitude in the choice of tenses, and permit us to read, "what he had been to her." — ED.].

2. **Signet-ring** — "Signet," a diminutive of the word "sign," and means a small seal, such as was put into a ring worn upon the finger. It is thought that not one of the ancient kings of Persia could write his name. (Rawlinson, Anc. Mon., iii. 229.) They used the signet-ring for the signing of all documents. As the etymology of the Hebrew word indicates — שְׁנִיר from שָׁנַר, "to impress into any soft substance"; hence, to impress a seal, to seal — the main idea of this ring was that it served the purpose of signing one's name; that is, making a sign that would stand for one's name. (See on iii. 10; viii. 8, 10; also, Excursus on Signet Rings and Seals.) How easily might such ignorant kings as the above be imposed upon by their more learned scribes. **Esther placed Mordecai over the house of Haman** — he whom Haman had plotted to destroy, was now on the pinnacle of honor and power. "Man proposes, but God disposes." Wickedness cannot prosper, even in this world. Haman passed away, and Mordecai sits in his place, and is clothed with power for the saving of the people whom their wicked adversary would annihilate.

3. **Continued, spoke, fell at his feet, wept, besought** — here are five verbs describing the actions of Esther, and they disclose what a world of deep and mingled emotions had taken possession of her soul.

the Agagite, and his machination which he contrived against the Jews.

4 Then the king extended to Esther the golden sceptre.

And Esther arose and stood before the king ; ⁵ and she said : If it seem good to the king, and if I have found favor before him, and the thing appear right to the king, and I be pleasing

They reveal also the nobler and heroic elements of character. She was playing no part, but was a real person in actual life. Many a one that had undergone what had been laid on her would have ceased now that Haman's body hung on the gibbet and Mordecai was in the seat of power. But this courageous woman rested not until all the work was done. She carries her people on her heart, and is ever ready to face danger in their behalf. These five verbs are more eloquent of heroic daring, and of love for truth and right, than Caesar's *veni, vidi, vici*. There is no self in these words of Esther. In her position she was safe. But her people were not safe ; the church of God was not safe ; therefore she wept and besought in their behalf. The word **וְיִרְאֶה**, rendered **continued** — literally *added*, often has the force of an auxiliary verb, and, in its relation to the verb following, may be rendered “again,” “further,” “still more.” E.g. Gen. iv. 2 ; viii. 12 ; xxv. 1 ; Judges xi. 14. **His machination which he contrived** — literally *machinated* ; the verb and noun come from the same root. **וְיַעֲשֶׂה** means to contrive, devise, invent. The Hebrew language has no stronger word to imply that Haman, a man of great powers, put his whole thought and ingenuity into the plot of ruining the people of God. But “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Cor. i. 25). “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. viii. 31.)

4. The golden sceptre — the sceptre was a sign of office. It was a rod or staff borne in the hand as an evidence of authority and power. The Roman magistrates had the *fascæ*, i.e. an axe tied up in a bundle of rods, borne before them as a sign of their authority. The sceptre is frequently referred to in Jewish history. The heads of tribes bore it as well as the kings (Gen. xlix. 10). The word translated sceptre, **מְגַדֵּל**, is often rendered “tribe.” The Persian kings had golden sceptres, probably a wooden staff covered with a plating of gold. The inclination of it towards a subject indicated favor ; kissing or touching the top of it was a sign of submission and homage. (See notes on v. 2 ; also *Excursus on the Golden Sceptre*.)

5-7. And she said : If it seem good to the king, etc. — these

in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters, the machination of Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king; ⁶for how can I look upon the evil which will befall my people! and how can I behold the destruction of my kindred!

⁷ Then Xerxes the king said to the queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew: Behold, the house of Haman have I given to Esther, and him have they impaled upon the tree; because he laid his hands upon the Jews. ⁸ Write ye also, in the king's name, concerning the Jews as seems good in your eyes, and seal with the king's signet-ring; because a writing that is written in the name of the king and is sealed with the king's signet-ring may not be reversed.

⁹ And the king's scribes were summoned at that very time,

speeches of Esther are well worthy of notice, as showing her to be a woman of no mean endowments. None but a truly heroic soul could have uttered such words as these, and with such effect. These speeches themselves afford an argument in favor of the genuineness and authenticity of this book. If they were uttered by Esther, and recorded by the scribes who wrote down all that fell from the lips of the king and those in his presence, and were engrossed in "the book of daily records," we may well expect to find in these extracts from that book a true reflection of the genius, the character, and intellectual ability of this remarkable woman. Put these speeches beside those of any heathen woman of antiquity, and see how they tower up in all that constitutes womanly nobility. *מִבָּן* — *how in the world?* An intensive form of the word.

8. A writing that is written in the name of the king, and is sealed with the king's signet-ring may not be reversed — the Persian kings claimed to be divine; and the people compelled the monarch to maintain such a state as they thought became a god. "He was required to live chiefly in seclusion; to eat his meals for the most part alone; never to go on foot beyond the palace walls; never to revoke an order once given, however much he might regret it; never to draw back from a promise, whatever ill results he might anticipate from its performance. To maintain the quasi-divine character which attached to him it was necessary that he should seem infallible, immutable, and wholly free from the weakness of repentance." (Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, iii. 225, 226.)

9. And the scribes — this is the longest verse in the Bible. The

in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the twenty-third of it ; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, and to the satraps, and the pashas, and princes of the provinces which [extend] from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, — to each province according to its writing, and to each people according to its tongue, and to the Jews according to their writing and according to their tongue.

word rendered “scribe,” שְׁלֵטָה, occurs only in one other place (iii. 12) in this book. Among the Jews, the position of scribe was one of great importance. Jonathan, the paternal uncle of David was a counsellor, a wise man, and a *scribe*. That he was a *scribe* seems to have been the climax of honor. Ezra is a very prominent character in Jewish history, and is distinguished by the appellation of the “scribe.” Among the Persians, the honor attaching to this term must have been even greater than among the Jews, because fewer of the people in proportion could wield the pen. The Persian writings remaining to us are found only in cuneiform inscriptions cut into hard material. They are rock tablets, inscriptions upon stone buildings, and mottoes or legends on vases and cylinders. There is no doubt that besides these cuneiform characters there were smaller cursive letters which were made with the pen, and were in use for common writing upon parchment. “Ctesias informs us that the royal archives were written on parchment; and there is abundant evidence that writing was an art perfectly familiar to the educated Persian.” (Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, iii. 266.) **To the satraps, pashas, and princes of the provinces** — the satraps, Heb. שְׁלֵטָה, were the rulers of the provinces, and were imperial magistrates, representing the king in the provinces. Their authority was purely political and civil, the king making the military commanders always amenable to himself. The number of the satraps and the extent of their jurisdiction varied at different times. (See Lange’s Commentary on Daniel, p. 139; Herodotus, iii. 89; Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, iii. 418; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, viii. 6; also see on iii. 12.) **The pashas** — Heb. שְׁלֵטָה, were inferior to the satraps. They are called “governors,” “captains,” or deputies,” in king James’s version. At the time of Ezra, Palestine was under the government of a pasha (Ezra viii. 36). Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah, was appointed by Cyrus the Great, pasha, of Jerusalem (Ezra v. 14). We cannot tell just the nature and limits of their authority, only that

¹⁰ And he wrote in the name of the king Xerxes, and sealed with the king's signet-ring, and sent the letters by the couriers upon horses—the riders upon coursers and mules the offspring

it was civil and inferior to the authority of the satraps. They were imperial officers also. Some think that the word שָׁפֵט is derived from *pa*, foot, basis, or support; and *shah*, ruler; it being implied that the pashas were the support of the king or ruler. The princes of the provinces—the Hebrew for *princes*, רַבִּים, is derived from שָׁפֵט, to rule, or have dominion over. The שְׂרִים were inferior to the satraps and the pashas; they were not imperial officers sent from the court, but were natives clothed with a degree of local power and jurisdiction under the eyes of the higher imperial magistrates. According to their writing, and according to their tongue—writing means the written alphabet of the people, including the size and shape of the letters, the order of their arrangement, the material on which they wrote, etc.; the tongue means the particular dialect or speech of each province. It might have been translated: According to their written alphabet, and their speech, or spoken dialect. This shows how great pains was taken to communicate the knowledge of the decree.

10. He wrote in the name of the king Xerxes—what unlimited power was put into the hands of Mordecai! He could write what he would, affix to it the royal seal, and it would become the law of the realm. Haman had sought to destroy the people of God; but his plot had been turned to the elevating of them to a place of eminence in the nation. Is not this to be the fate of all evil? Will not God overrule it for good? And sealed with the king's signet-ring—this was the signet-ring which the king had removed from the hand of Haman, and put upon the hand of Mordecai (viii. 2). Seals were in ancient Persia employed, as we have seen, to authenticate public documents. They had the owner's name or some other device engraven upon them. Such seals were made of burned clay, of copper, of silver, gold, or often of precious stones. The seal was often in the form of a cylinder, which was rolled upon the moist clay, illustrating the words of Job, “it is turned as clay to the seal” (xxxviii. 14). (See notes on iii. 10; viii. 2; also, Excursus on Signet Rings and Seals.) By the hand of—this expression בְּ יָד means what we express by the preposition *by*. It occurs frequently in this book (i. 12; i. 15; iii. 13). Couriers—the English word courier is from the Latin *currere*, to run. English post is first the stopping-place, then the couriers who stopped, then the

of mares ; ¹¹in which [letters] the king granted to the Jews who were in any city :

TO ASSEMBLE AND STAND FOR THEIR LIVES ; TO DESTROY, TO KILL, AND TO CAUSE TO PERISH ALL THE FORCE OF PEOPLE AND PROVINCE ASSAILING THEM ; [TO DESTROY] LITTLE CHILDREN AND WOMEN ; AND [TAKE] THEIR PROPERTY FOR SPOIL, — ¹²IN ONE DAY, THROUGHOUT ALL THE PROVINCES OF THE KING XERXES ; ON THE THIRTEENTH OF THE TWELFTH MONTH, THAT IS, THE MONTH ADAR.

message itself; finally the manner of conveying the message. A courier is a runner. The Hebrew word γַּן means to run. It is sometimes used figuratively : “that he may *run* (^{γַּן}) that readeth,” i.e. may read rapidly, or seem to run over the page. The שְׁרָכִים were servants that ran before the chariot of a prince, called running footmen. They were also the royal messengers of the Hebrews in the times of the kings. But they were especially the mounted state-messengers of the Persians. They carried the royal edicts to the provinces, and returned to the king with despatches of importance. (See Excursus on Couriers ; also, on “Letters and Posts of the Ancients.”)

11. To assemble and stand for their lives — the king did not reverse his decree issued for the total destruction of the Jews, but he simply granted them the privilege, given by God himself to all his creatures, of self-defence. The king saw the injustice and dreadful wrong perpetrated in securing the decree to annihilate the Jewish people, and doubtless he meant that *self-defence* should now receive its utmost latitude of interpretation. (See a full discussion of this principle in Discourses on the Book of Esther, by the Hebrew Club: “On Self-Defence.”) The decree is printed in the text above in small capitals ; the official subscription follows in italics.

12. On one day, throughout all the provinces of the king Xerxes — the slaughter was to continue but one day. The proclamation (iii. 13) gave authority for the slaughter of the Jews only on the thirteenth of the month Adar. Any attempt upon their lives after that would be unlawful. It should be observed that the lives of subjects were so completely in the hands of despotic rulers in ancient Persia, that permission must be given by royal edict for men to defend themselves against violence and death. Were it not for this edict the Jews would have been expected to be passive under the hand of the executioner. What a cruel oppressor man is ! What danger in irre-

¹³ *A copy of the writing to be given as a decree in every province, published to all the peoples; even for the Jews to be ready on that day to be avenged on their enemies.*

¹⁴ The couriers — riders upon coursers and mules — went forth, hastened and urged on by the word of the king. And the decree was given in Shushan the castle.

¹⁵ And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal vesture of violet and white, and a great crown of gold, and a mantle of fine linen and purple; and the city Shushan rejoiced and was glad. ¹⁶ To the Jews there were light and

sponsible power put into the hands of men! No wonder that David said: “Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man” (2 Sam. xxiv. 14). **Hastened and urged on by the word of the king** — these two participles show with what earnestness and resolution the king had espoused the cause of the Jews. When the edict for their destruction was given (iii. 15), we were told that “the couriers went forth, *pressed on* by the word of the king,” בָּרַךְ, to *impel, to urge*. In the verse before us (viii. 14), they are *hastened and urged*, בָּרַךְ, to *hasten*, and בָּרַךְ, to *impel, to urge*. More urgency was put into the sending forth of these second messengers than had attended the going forth of the first.

15. And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king, etc. — what a change from the sackcloth and ashes to “the royal vesture of violet and white, and a great crown of gold, and a mantle of fine linen and purple.” God often lifts those who are in the dust to places of great honor and power. If our cause is just and right, we shall not wait long before help will come from on high. If God seems to delay, it will only be that the triumph may be the more signal when it comes. **The city Shushan rejoiced and was glad** — this would indicate that the people of Shushan, who were now almost wholly Persians, sympathized with the Jews both in their sorrow and their joy. There were many things in the religions of the two nations that were in close affinity, many things in their character and habits; so that God seems to have laid a good foundation for the superstructure of Jewish elevation which was soon to follow. The people in the chief city of the nation were their friends. The Jews by their more pure and elevated character seem to have made friends among the various peoples wherever their lot was cast.

gladness, and joy and honor. ¹⁷ And in every province and in every city whithersoever the word of the king and his decree came, there were joy and gladness to the Jews, a banquet and a good day. And many from the peoples of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

IX. ¹ Then in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of it, when the word of the king and his

17. And many from the peoples of the land became Jews — not a very commendable motive prevailed upon them: “for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.” Fear is a true and worthy motive, however, if not abused. It should always have an inferior place in influencing intelligent, voluntary beings. If it had been said that “many became Jews” because they were convinced that the Jews were a nobler people in their life and character, their religion and hopes; or because they thought their cause a just one; or because they desired to express their hatred of the policy that had sought the destruction of three millions of innocent subjects, we should hold them in higher esteem. The same principle holds now in regard to the conversion of souls from the world, to the life, fellowship, and service of God. Men may turn from the service of the world and sin, through *fear* of the consequences of such a course. The end will be bad, and they will flee from it. Such persons often come into the life of God, walk in heavenly places here, and enter into joy hereafter. But fear is not the noblest motive by which to influence a soul to choose God and eternal glory. How much better to yield to the love of God, or be drawn by the attractiveness of virtue or holiness, or the beauty and loveliness of Christ! The man who says he will follow and serve God because such a life is *right*, because it is a duty that he owes to the Author of all good, often becomes one of the truest and most efficient workers for God; yet there is no power like love to lift one out of self and set him on the high places of the spiritual kingdom. Where *fear* is the predominant motive in the beginning of a life with the people of God, it is apt soon to relax, and the fervor dies, and the life languishes or becomes extinct.

CHAP. IX. 1. **And in the twelfth month** — it would appear from this that nearly nine months intervened between the issuing of the decree for the saving of the Jews and the time appointed for their destruction (viii. 9). This would give the Jews ample time to complete all

decree came to be executed ; on the day when the enemies of the Jews expected to have dominion over them (but it was turned, so that the Jews themselves had dominion over those who hated them) ²the Jews assembled in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Xerxes to lay hands on those who sought their harm. And not a man stood in the face of them ; for the fear of them fell upon all the peoples.

³ And all the princes of the provinces, and the satraps, and

their arrangements for self-defence. Just eleven months intervened between the giving of the destructive decree (iii. 12), and the time for its execution (iii. 13). This shows in a remarkable manner the providence of God in the care of his people. In the first month, the thirteenth day of it, the decree went forth for the destruction of all the Jews (iii. 12) ; in the third month, twenty-third day, the decree permitting the Jews to stand in self-defence was sent forth (viii. 9) ; in the twelfth month, the thirteenth day, came the dreadful work of slaughter (ix. 1). **But it was turned, so that the Jews themselves had dominion over those who hated them** — God often reverses the most skilfully laid plans of the enemies of his people. “He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Ps. lxxv. 7). Men may not see the real agent in the work ; they may make the cause impersonal, and say, “it was turned,” when finally they will see that “God turned it so that,” etc.

2. The Jews assembled in their cities — what a day that must have been to the Jewish people ! What prayer was offered that morning, and during the days previous ! They stood simply on the defensive as the words show : “to lay hands on those who sought their harm.” **Not a man stood in the face of them** — with God and right on their side the Jews were mightier than the mightiest of their foes. This is true in any cause. The word “stood” means *successfully stood*. We know that many did attack the Jews and seek to destroy them, but not one of them killed his man. God prepared the way for this victory by inspiring all the peoples with fear and dread of those who were manifestly the people of God.

3. What an illustration this verse furnishes of the Saviour’s words : “To him that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance.” When the Jews were friendless, “none so poor as to do them reverence” ; but now that the king is on their side multitudes flock to their

pashas, and the managers of the king's business, helped the Jews ; for the fear of Mordecai fell upon them. ⁴For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went into all the provinces ; and the man Mordecai became greater and greater.

⁵And the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter and destruction. And they did according to their pleasure to those who hated them. ⁶And in Shushan the castle the Jews slew and caused to perish five hundred men ; ⁷and Parshandatha and Dalphon and Aspatha, ⁸and Poratha and Adalia and Aridatha, ⁹and Parmashta and Arisai

standard. This is human nature as truly to-day as it was five hundred years before the birth of Christ. **Managers of, etc.** — See on iii. 9.

4. The English word *fame* means what is *said* about one ; from the Latin *for*, Greek *φημί*. In Hebrew the word *רֹאשׁ* (rendered *fame*) means that which is *heard* about one. It is the same idea, only viewed in the one case from the point of the speaker, in the other from the point of the hearer.

5. **And the Jews smote all their enemies** — we need to keep in mind that the Jews stood strictly on the defensive (viii. 11). The record shows that they made no attack on any, but simply repelled the violence of them who sought to destroy them.

6. **In Shushan the castle the Jews slew and caused to perish five hundred men** — this is not an incredibly large number when we remember that the estimated population of Shushan at the time of which we speak was half a million. (Keil's Commentary on the Book of Esther, p. 309). It shows too how furiously their enemies attacked them ; and that had self-defence been denied the Jews they would have been exterminated as a people.

7-9. Here we have the names of the ten sons of Haman. Canon Rawlinson tells us that "excepting Adalia they were all readily traceable to Old Persian roots." Bishop Wordsworth says : "The names of the ten sons of Haman were written in the Hebrew manuscripts of this book in compact perpendicular columns, as if they were hanging one over another ; and the reader of this book in the synagogue is required to pronounce all the names at one breath. The Targum says that they were all suspended in one line, at stated intervals, one above the other" (Wordsworth's Commentary on Esther, p. 382).

and Aridai, and Vajezatha,¹⁰ the ten sons of Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the adversary of the Jews, they slew ; but on the spoil they laid not their hands.

¹¹ On that very day the number of those slain in Shushan the castle came before the king. ¹² And the king said to Esther the queen : In Shushan the castle the Jews have slain and caused to perish five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman ; in the rest of the king's domains what have they done ? And what is thy petition ? and it shall be granted thee ; and what is thy request further ? and it shall be performed.

10. **But on the spoil they laid not their hands** — this shows the magnanimity and unselfishness of the Jews. According to the decree (viii. 11) the Jews were allowed “to take the spoil of them for booty”; but three times it is recorded (ix. 10, 15, 16) that “on the spoil they laid not their hands.” They were allowed also “to destroy, to kill, and cause to perish little children and women,” as well as “the force,” i.e. *the military force*, of the people; but the record expressly declares that they put to death only men (*בָּנִים*, ix. 6, 12, 15). We can see how this would come out of the fact that the Jews stood on the defensive, and that only the armed force of the people, i.e. *the men*, would be the assailants. The Jews may also have fought behind fortifications, and thus have been protected. We have no evidence that the Jews had any *desire* to destroy the women and children. It was the edict of the heathen king, the counterpart of his previous decree (iii. 13), which gave them the liberty. But they were the people of God, and as such morally far above their oppressors. The Jews acquired no moral right to the property of the men whom they slew. The wives and children of the slain men needed the property all the more that the husband and father had been taken from them. It was not plunder that the Jews sought, but self-protection, the right to exist unmolested.

11. Here we see the dispatch with which the information was collected, as well as the general interest felt in it.

12. The king is disposed to do all in his power for the relief of the imperilled Jews. There is no evidence that he ever cherished ill-will towards them. He was simply an instrument in the hands of the wicked Haman. Now he becomes an instrument in the hands of those

¹³ And Esther said : If it seem good to the king, let it be granted to the Jews who are in Shushan to do to-morrow also according to the decree of this day ; and let the ten sons of Haman be impaled upon the tree.

¹⁴ And the king commanded it to be so done ; and the decree was given in Shushan ; and the ten sons of Haman were impaled.

¹⁵ And the Jews who were in Shushan assembled also on the fourteenth day of the month Adar and slew in Shushan three hundred men ; but on the spoil they laid not their hands.

¹⁶ But the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's

who seek to save the people of God. This verse is important as showing that the idea of further slaughter originated not with Esther, but rather with the king himself. He suggests here that something more is needed, and asks what it shall be.

13. This is not so much Esther's counsel, as the counsel of those Jews who understood the situation and could tell from a statesman's point of view what was needed. There was no thirst for blood in Esther's heart. Her whole character as delineated in this book is averse to this ; but she was made of stuff stern enough to demand further bloodshed if it were needed to stay the unrighteous blotting out of her people and God's church. This verse also shows that the right of self-defence was granted the Jews only as a special favor. There could be nothing wrong in asking that the privilege of self-defence might extend over all the days of the king's reign. It is what subjects in all Christian civilized society enjoy. As to impaling Haman's sons, that was intended to strike terror into the adversaries of the Jews. Nothing could have been better fitted to check the work of slaughter. They had been slain ; now let them be hung up as a warning to all who had their spirit, and were doing their fell work. These sons seem to have had the spirit and purpose of their father, to " kill, destroy, and cause to perish " all the Jews. Doubtless Esther made this request at the prompting of Mordecai and such wise Jews as were in conference with him.

15. And slew in Shushan three hundred men — it appears then that the whole number slain by the Jews in Shushan was only eight hundred.

16. In all the provinces, with an estimated population of one hundred

provinces assembled, and stood for their lives, and rested from their enemies ; and slew of those who hated them seventy-five thousand (but on the spoil they laid not their hands) ¹⁷ on the thirteenth day of the month Adar ; and they rested on the fourteenth of it, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

¹⁸ But the Jews who were in Shushan assembled on the thirteenth of it and on the fourteenth of it, but rested on the fifteenth of it, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

¹⁹ Therefore the provincial Jews who dwelt in the country towns were making the fourteenth of the month Adar a rejoicing and a feasting, and a day of gladness and of sending portions, every one to his neighbor.

²⁰ And Mordecai wrote these things and sent letters to all

millions, seventy-five thousand of the Jews' enemies were slain. There is no mention of the killing of even one Jew. Perhaps a remarkable providence preserved at this, as at other times of danger, the people of God. Possibly here, as occurs often in the Sacred Scriptures, only the number of enemies who were slain is given ; no mention being made of the loss of the victors. The Septuagint says that fifteen thousand was the number slain by the Jews. The larger number seems the more probable.

18. **But rested on the fifteenth** — the word נִשְׁתָּה is not the word which means the Sabbath rest ; it means primarily *to take breath* ; then it means to *have rest*, as from vexation, trouble, calamity, anxiety. No words can describe the solicitude and fear which must have filled the Jews in anticipation of the dreadful day fixed upon for their destruction. But now it was all over ; God had appeared as their helper, and their troubles were at an end. Sweet deliverance and rest were now their portion. In commemoration of their happy state on this day, they make it a day of "feasting and gladness." They did not celebrate the slaughter. There was no reminder of the day on which the destruction of their enemies occurred ; but the days on which rest and quiet came to them had a lasting memorial. Even now the Jews signalize those as the red-letter days in their calendar.

19-22. In order to secure throughout the kingdom uniformity in the celebration of the Purim festival, Mordecai wrote letters to all the provinces, enjoining upon the Jews to make both the fourteenth and the fifteenth days of the month Adar seasons of rejoicing and festivity.

the Jews, the near and the distant, who were in all the provinces of the king Xerxes,²¹ to enjoin upon them to celebrate the fourteenth day of the month Adar and the fifteenth day of it every year,²² as the days on which the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned to them from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a good day; in order to make them days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions, every one to his neighbor, and gifts to the needy.

²³ And the Jews adopted what they had begun to do and what Mordecai had written to them. ²⁴ Because Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the adversary of all the Jews, had plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume and exterminate them.

This shows a tender regard for the people on the part of the prime minister. A holiday was a godsend to them. He did not seek to grind the faces of the poor, to rob them of privileges and opportunities; but he did all in his power to multiply favors to them. The festival was probably called Purim, i.e. *lots*, in irony, as setting off in derisive speech the superstitious carefulness with which Haman had used lots to bring about their destruction. Many of the proudest names in the history of the church have had a similar origin, e.g. Methodist, Puritan, and probably the word Jew itself.

23. And the Jews adopted — *בָּאֵת* means to receive, admit, or adopt. Here it means that the Jews accepted and made as a law to govern them in all their future conduct, what Mordecai had written to them. Previously they had begun to observe the fourteenth day as a time of gladness and rejoicing. This seems to have been in obedience to a previous decree. But now, when Mordecai wrote to them, they also observed the fifteenth day. How much is implied in the word *בָּאֵת*, "adopted," we cannot tell. Whether anything is meant more than that they acquiesced in the appointment of Mordecai is uncertain. We have no knowledge of national or legislative action on the part of the Jews in their captivity.

24. The lot — the *lot* has performed an important part in human history. The promised land was divided among the twelve tribes by lot (Num. xxvi. 55); Haman cast lots for a day on which to exterminate the Jews; the crucifiers of Christ cast lots before the cross

²⁵ But when it came before the king he commanded, by the letters, that his wicked device which he had devised against the Jews should return upon his own head ; and they impaled him and his sons upon the tree. ²⁶ Therefore they called these days Purim, after the name Pur.

Now because of all the words of this letter, and of what they had seen concerning the matter, and what had come to them, ²⁷ the Jews ordained, and took upon themselves, and upon their children, and upon all who should join themselves to them,

upon his raiment (Matt. xxvii. 35) ; the apostles cast lots for a successor to Judas (Acts i. 26). The lot is an appeal to God, that he will determine for us what our own wisdom or diligence cannot decide. The lot should not be resorted to on trivial occasions, or when our own efforts can solve the difficulty. The word בָּזֶב means a *small stone*, or *pebble*, such as was used in casting lots. Then if means that which falls to one as his portion, or share, or fate, as decided by the lot. The English word “lot” means *part* or *portion*, and seems to carry the idea that our destinies are put into the box, and God chooses out the one suited to each individual.

25. **But when it came before the king** — the A.V. supplies the word *Esther* as the subject of the verb נִשְׁׁבַּע, which word has not occurred since ver. 13. There is no authority for this. The Hebrew is plain : *in the coming of it (i.e. the matter of destroying the Jews) before the king, he commanded, etc.* The word נִשְׁׁבַּע is in the construct infinitive, governed by the preceding נִ, and the suffix נִיְּ is its subject. The substance of the king’s command is : *that his wicked device which he had devised against the Jews should return upon his own head.* The next clause is not a part of the king’s command, but a fact added by the historian.

26. **Purim** — as to the origin and meaning of this word, see note on iii. 7 ; and as to the festival itself, see Discourse on the “Feast of Purim.” The first נִזְׁבֵּת is *causative*, introducing the reason why the Jews “called these days Purim.” The second נִזְׁבֵּת introduces an *inference* or *explanation*, like the English *now* in “*now Barabbas was a robber*” (John xviii. 40).

27. We see in this verse a remarkable instance of national solidarity. The Jewish nation, in its present and prospective members, was one community. One life, one interest, one fate, has awaited that people wherever they have lived. In many respects the Jews are the most

without fail to keep these two days, according to the writing in respect to them, and according to the time appointed for them each year ; ²⁸ that these days should be remembered and kept in every generation, every family, every province, and every city ; and that these days of Purim should not fail from the midst of the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their race.

²⁹ Then wrote Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, with all authority, to establish this

remarkable people that have ever lived upon the earth ; and the cause of it, humanly speaking, is their national unity. The Jews in the time of Esther pledged themselves and their successors to a specific course of action. They did it not from low, selfish, worldly considerations, but out of regard to God and the interests of religion. Their children have accepted the action of their ancestors as their own, and faithfully complied with all its requisitions. Such a national unity as this cannot but be most powerful in moulding and shaping the character and destiny of a nation. The Jews, though they have been scattered to the four winds and oppressed beyond measure, are still a mighty and unified people, their hearts throbbing with one life-current, and their wills subject to one Lord and King. National unity founded in religion finds a signal illustration in the Jews.

29. This second letter of Purim — here we have an added fact with respect to the Purim festival. The dangers and trials, the perils and agonies, through which Esther had passed in rescuing her people from the jaws of the more than fierce lion, she would not allow to pass into oblivion. As a reminder of these dangers she wrote another letter, Mordecai approving and with the great seal authorizing it, and sent it to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. This letter is called the *second*, the one mentioned in verse 20 of this chapter being considered the *first*. This second letter appointed “fasting and crying” as a part of the Purim festival. The fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month Adar were to be days of joy and gladness. Just when the fasting and crying were to occur we are not told in the text; but the facts that the modern Jews observe the day which Haman had fixed upon for the extermination of the Jews, i.e. the thirteenth of Adar, and the reasonableness of it, make it very probable that the thirteenth of Adar was the day for expressions of sorrow and mourning, while the fourteenth and fifteenth that immediately

second letter of Purim. ³⁰ And he sent letters to all the Jews, to the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the kingdom of Xerxes, messages of peace and truth, ³¹ to ordain these days of Purim in their appointed seasons, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined upon them, and as they had ordained for themselves and for their children the

followed were days of unbounded joy. We can see how this would keep the whole matter of their danger and deliverance most vividly before them, and thus preserve, in the national heart, gratitude to God the great deliverer. Days of fasting and prayer, humiliation and sorrow, are a good preparation for seasons of feasting and gladness.

30. And he sent letters — Esther was the author of the letter, but Mordecai as the grand vizier gave it its legal authority and stamp, and sent it forth into the provinces. **Messages of peace and truth** — this letter was not a summons to battle; it did not prescribe methods for slaughter and bloodshed; but it went forth as the herald of *peace* and the harbinger of *truth*. Fasting and prayer, humiliation before God and contrition for our sins, are among the best promoters of peace and discoverers of truth. The first meaning of **רְצָקָה** is firmness or stability, i.e. the truth is the firm and abiding thing.

31. As they had ordained for themselves and for their children — **רְצָקָה** means to confirm or establish. The same verb, in the Piel conjugation, in the earlier parts of this verse is rendered “to ordain” and “had enjoined.” **רְצִי** is a *stated* or *appointed time*, such as the regular sacred seasons or festivals. In the A.V. the word *appointed* is erroneously printed in italics, as if it was a word supplied. There seems to have been a perfect unanimity of sentiment between Esther and Mordecai on the one hand, and between them and the Jewish people on the other, as to the whole matter of the Purim festival. It is not improbable that the idea of a time for “fasting and crying” — Hebrew, *fastings and their crying* — as commemorating the fastings of Esther before going to the king, had occurred to the people, and been observed by them, before Esther proposed it. **הַבְּדִיל הַצּוֹנָאָת וְצָקָרָת** implies that the people talked about this matter and expressed themselves freely on it, even before Esther and Mordecai took it up. It would be a natural expression of gratitude from the popular heart after so great a deliverance. Wherever it had its origin it was fixed “with all authority,” i.e. with all the strength and force of law.

matters of the fasting and crying. ²² And the edict of Esther established these matters of Purim ; and it was written in the book.

X. ¹ And the king Xerxes laid a tribute upon the land and

32. The edict of Esther — this edict, contained in ver. 29–31, is the command to observe a season of “fasting and crying” as a part of the Purim festival. It is called Esther’s edict as being in her honor, and as having officially originated with her. **Written in the book** — i.e. the book of the records of the kings of Media and Persia. This is another way of saying that these matters were decreed and recorded, so that they became in the highest sense official. Keil says : “הַקְרֵבָר, the book in which this decree was written, cannot mean the writing of Esther mentioned in ver. 29, but some written document concerning Purim which has not come down to us, though used as an authority by the author of the present book.” (Keil’s Commentary on the Book of Esther, p. 378.) Bishop Wordsworth says : “It was written in the book which the reader has now before him.” (Wordsworth’s Commentary on Esther, p. 384.) He quotes Serarius, Hävernick, and Dr. Pusey, as holding the same view. Professor Schultz, in Lange’s series, says : “It was written in the book indicated in v. 20, in which Mordecai wrote concerning these events, and which is not identical with our Esther-book, but may have served as one of its sources.” (Lange on Esther, p. 92.) Bertheau says : “A writing on the special subject of the Purim festival, which has been lost.” Canon Rawlinson says : “the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.” (The Bible Commentary on Esther, p. 497.)

CHAP. X. 1. Laid a tribute upon the land and the islands of the sea — this was made necessary by the exhaustive drain upon the exchequer which the Grecian expedition had made. **כֶּבֶשׂ** means tribute-service, i.e. tribute to be rendered by personal service in the army or on the public works. Solomon made such a levy (1 Kings v. 13). Joshua also exacted such a tribute-service of the Canaanites (Josh. xvii. 13). The word **כֶּבֶשׂ** means also taxes in a general sense, such as money, produce, or anything for the support of the government (1 Kings xiii. 18 ; 2 Chron. viii. 8 ; 2 Sam. xx. 24 ; see *Excursus on Tribute*). Although as one result of his Grecian expedition Xerxes had lost the islands of the Aegean sea, yet he would be unwilling to confess it, and he would doubtless lay a tax on them. **It is always easier to impose taxes than it is to collect them.**

the islands of the sea. ² And all the deeds of his power and his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the king of Media and Persia? ² For Mor-

2, 3. In these verses is set forth the greatness of Xerxes for the purpose of showing to what an elevation Mordecai, as the head and representative of the Jewish nation, had been raised. The book opened with the almost total obscuration of God's people; it closes with them as the brightest star in the galaxy of nations which composed this great kingdom. Thus the providence of God is the more manifest in caring for, delivering, and promoting them who trust and love him.

Book of the chronicles—i.e. the book which contained the record of all state and official matters. Probably the Book of Esther, as we have it, was to some extent copied from that “book of chronicles.” The omission of the name of God from the book, and of the mention of such religious practices as were distinctively Jewish, can be explained upon this hypothesis. **Media and Persia**—these words occur five times in this book; in four of which they stand as Persia and Media (Esther i. 3, 14, 18, 19). The explanation is that the Median supremacy antedated the Persian, and in the “book of chronicles” Media stood first; but the common parlance and correspondence of Xerxes' day, when the Persians were the dominant nation, reversed the official order, as we find it four times in chapter i. In that chapter we have popular history; in chapter x. we have official record (see Tyrwhitt's Esther and Ahasuerus. Vol. i. 15, 16). In the book of Daniel, which antedates the book of Esther by a century or more, the Persians were not in the ascendancy, and we find in every case the *Medes and Persians*, or the *Medes* alone.

Acceptable to the multitude of his brethren—Mordecai was a universal favorite with the Jews. He was so manifestly raised up by God for the deliverance and promotion of his nation, that the Jews everywhere felt that they honored God in honoring his instrument. Gratitude also for what Mordecai had done in their behalf, would incite them to respect and affection. **Seeking good for his people**—Mordecai set a good example for all rulers. He did not seek *self* in honor or wealth; the good of the *people* was his aim. This is true patriotism. It is a virtue too rare in the world. The apostolic rule is, “in honor preferring one another” (Rom. xii. 10). How greatly dishonesty, trickery, corruption of all kinds, would be diminished in the church and in the world if this injunction were followed. Those who

deceit the Jew was next to the king Xerxes, and great among the Jews, and acceptable to the multitude of his brethren, seeking good for his people, and speaking peace to his race.

do follow it, however, get to themselves more of real honor and lasting fame than they could receive in any other way. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). **Speaking peace to his race** — שָׁמֵךְ means here *his race*, or all the Jewish people. Mordecai was a *speaker* or *preacher* as well as actor. He was not a dumb man, never having anything to say for God or the church; but one of his distinguishing characteristics was that he spoke peace (שָׁמֵךְ) to his race. שָׁמֵךְ is one of the grandest and sweetest words in the Hebrew language. It was used in salutations. נָאַסְוָה שָׁמֵךְ (peace be to you) was the Jewish benediction. שָׁמֵךְ means welfare, health, prosperity, and all that is good. Mordecai was not a fault-finder, a censurer, but he spoke words of cheer, hope, encouragement, and prosperity to his race. These are the closing words in the historical part of the Old Testament, and they seem to be a kind of prophecy of him who was to come bringing peace and salvation to all nations. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition. And came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Eph. ii. 14, 17).

ANCIENT PERSIAN ALPHABET.

Pers.	Heb.	Rom.	
𐎧	א	ä	Darios, Darius,
𐎤	ב	b	دَرِيَشَ Daryavesh,
𐎦	ג	g	دَرِيَوْشَ Daryavush,
𐎨	ד	d	Dâryvush, or
𐎩	ו	v	Daryvush.
𐎪-𐎫	ז	z	اهسuerus.
𐎱-𐎲	ח	kh	اهسuerus.
𐎵-𐎶	ט	t	Akhashverosh,
𐎷-	י	y	Artaxerxes.
𐎸 or 𐎹	ה	k	Khshyârsha.
𐎸= or 𐎹=	ת	m	Agraxeges.
=	ת	n	Artaxerxes.
𐎻	ס	s	آششآ، or
𐎻	פ	p	آششآ، or
𐎻 or 𐎵	ר	r	Artakhshashta, or
𐎻	ש	Sh	Artakhshasta,
𐎷-𐎵	ת	th	آششتر، or
𐎷	ע	u	Artakhshtra.
𐎻	ת	t	
-𐎻	ו or v		

𐎭 = f

EXCURSUSES.

EXCURSUS A.

PERSIAN WORDS AND NAMES.

We present in this Excursus so much of the cuneiform alphabet of the ancient Persians as is needful to illustrate the argument on pp. 10–12 of the Introduction, and to set forth what is known of certain words of Persian origin in the book. The fourth column of the schedule (see opposite page) pertains entirely to the argument in the Introduction, but carries its own explanation in itself.

In referring the words which follow, to a known, or in some cases to a supposed origin, we have condensed Canon Rawlinson's account of them from his notes appended to Ezra and Esther, in the work familiarly known as the Speaker's Commentary.

“**ပ**ְרָתָמִים partemim, which is found only in Esth. i. 3, and Dan. i. 3, is the plural of **פְרָתָם**, which was the Hebrew mode of expressing the Persian **ܦܼܾܶܶ ܳܶܶ ܵܶܶ ܷܶܶ** fratama, first [the vowels must be supplied]. Fratama corresponds to the Sanscrit prathama; the Zend frathēma; the Greek πρῶτος; the Latin *primus*. Daniel and Esther use the word of the ‘first’ men in the kingdom. Compare the Latin use of the word *primores*.” — Rawlinson.

ܦܼܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ Paras, Persia. Esth. i. 18. This was written **ܦܼܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ** Parsa.

ܟܼܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ karpas, which occurs in Esth. i. 6, and nowhere else, conjecturally in the Persian literation **ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ** cognate to the Sanscrit *karpasa*, cotton, Greek κάρπασος, Latin, *carbasus* or *carbasa*.

ܟܼܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ kether, “crown,” = **ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ** khshatram (Esth. i. 11; ii. 17; vi. 8). Compare Greek κίτρης or κιδηρης. Khsh = χ, changed to k by the omission of the sibilant.

ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ pur, “the lot,” Esth. iii. 7; ix. 24, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, evidently a Persian word, probably written **ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ** or, perhaps **ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ ܰܶܶ**

The word has not yet been found in the old Persian. It is twice (iii. 7; ix. 24) accompanied by its Hebrew equivalent גָּרָל goral.

גַּתְּשֶׁגֶן pathshegen. Esth. iii. 14; iv. 8; viii. 13, "copy," or "transcript," has no possible Semitic derivation, and seems to represent a Persian word پَتِهْگَانَ patihagana, derived, apparently, from the preposition *patiya*, "to," and *thab* "to speak," which is well-known in old Persian. The שֶׁגֶן shegen, in גַּתְּשֶׁגֶן pathshegen, reminds us of the German *sagen*, *singen*, and the English *say* and *sing*, which are probably cognate.

אֲקַחְשְׁתְּרִינִים akhashteranim, Esth. viii. 10, 14, not "camels," as in the A.V., but an adjective, signifying royal, formed from the old Persian *khshatram* [see under כְּהֵר kether, "crown," above], which would yield the adjective כְּהֵרְשָׁתְּרָנָה khshatrana, which with a prosthetic, corresponds with אֲקַחְשְׁתְּרִין, the singular of אֲקַחְשְׁתְּרִינִים akhashteranim.

אֲקַחְשְׁדָרְפָּן akhashdarpan, כְּהֵרְשָׁתְּרָפָן khshatrappa, Gr. σαρπάπης satrap, ascertained from the Behistun inscription. There is, as usual, the prosthetic נ, and the *tr* of the Persian becomes *dr* in the Hebrew. Esth. iii. 12; viii. 9; ix. 3.

גָּזָה genez, Esth. iii. 9; iv. 7. The term does not occur in the inscriptions; but there can be little doubt that it existed and was written גָּזָה or גָּזָה gaza. It was probably pronounced *ganza* rather than *gaza*.

אִגְּגֵרָה iggera, or as in Esth. ix. 26 and 29, אִגְּגֵרָת iggereth. Assyrian *igirtu*; its Persian form was very probably آغَارَه agara, and its pronunciation *angara*, Gr. ἄγγαρος. Letter was perhaps its primitive meaning (compare modern Persian *angareh*, an account book); but from this it was transferred to the letter carriers, and then to the entire system of posts established throughout the empire by Darius Hystaspis. The ἀγγαρεύειν of Matt. v. 41, obtains its meaning from this system.

ပִּתְּגָם pithgam, Esth. i. 20. This word compared with the modern Persian *paigam*, and the Armenian *patkam*, appears to point to an old Persian noun *patikama*, پَتِيكَامَة which must have had the sense of "command," "edict." The first element of the word would be the preposition *patiya*, "to," which becomes *pati* in composition. The other is perhaps *kama*, "wish," or "will."

EXCURSUS B.

THE TOPOGRAPHY AND BUILDINGS.

I. SHUSHAN.

The site of that once famous capital, the Susa (*Σοῦσα*) of the Greeks, has unquestionably been found upon the east bank of the Shapur, a small tributary of the Dizful, flowing between the latter river from the east and the Kerkhah on the west. These three rivers were respectively the Eulaeus, Coprates, and Choaspes of the ancients. Here, one hundred and twenty-five miles north from Mohammerah at the mouth of the Tigris, and about two hundred miles east by south from the site of ancient Babylon, in lat. $30^{\circ} 10' N.$, and long. $48^{\circ} 26' E.$, from Greenwich, at a spot now called Sus or Shus by the natives, there are extensive traces of the ancient Shushan.

At a very remote age this city was the capital of the country of Elam (Gen. xiv. 9) called Kissia by the Greeks, and at present known as Khusistan or Susiana, a province south of Assyria and west of Persia proper. The conquest of Shushan about 660 b.c. by Asshurban-pal, a late king of Nineveh, is recorded on a prism in the British Museum. Here the Assyriologist reads: "I overwhelmed Elam through its extent. Shushan the royal city I captured." Loftus (Chaldea and Susiana, p. 428) errs, however, in giving a ground-plan of Madaktu as being Shushan. (Compare Anc. Mon., Vol. ii. pp. 208, 209). From the dominion of Assyria this province was transmitted, with the supremacy, to the Babylonian empire. That royal buildings existed here during the new monarchy, is seen from the records of profane history, as well as from the residence of Daniel at Shushan.¹

Cyrus the Persian, conquering all these countries, and extending his empire greatly to the westward, must soon have found Shushan the most central spot from which to rule his vast realm. Passing over the immediate successors of Cyrus, Darius Hystaspis, as a part of his broad plans for the organization of the empire, distinctly recognized Shushan as the capital, and constructed some of those palaces and works to which the Book of Esther incidentally refers.

The Achaemenian monarchs of Persia doubtless often found refuge from the annual extremes of temperature in the warmer climate of

¹ Dan. viii. 2. The river Ulai (Eulaens) is to be identified with the Shapur, part of which anciently ran on the east of Shushan, where a dry channel is now discoverable (Loftus, pp. 424-430). There seems to be a reference to this bifurcation in Dan. viii. 16.

Babylon, or the cooler air of Persepolis and Ecbatana. But, on the whole, in no spot could so much of the year be comfortably spent as in Shushan ; in no other locality was the water so excellent, and the soil so fertile (Journal of London Geographical Society, Vol. ix. pp. 70, 71). Susa seems, therefore, to have been the ordinary residence of the court, and is believed by some to have exceeded in magnificence both Persepolis and Ecbatana. (For evidence on these points see Rawlinson's Herodotus, Book V. chap. xlxi. p. 256, note.)

Describing early spring in this vicinity, Loftus says, "nowhere have I seen such rich vegetation as that which clothes the verdant plains of Shush, interspersed with numerous plants of a sweet-scented and delicate iris" (Chaldaea and Susiana, p. 346). The flower of which Mr. Loftus speaks (*Iris sisyrychnium, L.*), abundant in Palestine also, is one of those called "lily" by the Orientals. It is true that by the word *shōshān* (Hebrew), or *susan* (Arabic), they mean any large, bright flower. (Tristram's Natural History of the Bible, *sub* Lily.) But the purple of this iris is the royal color of Persia. Hence it is not strange that some have thought the name of the city Shushan to be of Semitic origin, and taken from this little *shoshan*, so abundant upon her plains. If Shushan means a *lily*, very possibly this is the reference. But, as others suppose, Shushan is a Pehlevi word, meaning "pleasant," and the neighboring city built by Shapur is called Shuster, in the signification of *more pleasant* (Ker Porter's Travels, Vol. ii. p. 411).

Of the mounds which now mark the site of Shushan four are especially noticeable. Coming from the west, the traveller crosses the Shapur, a small stream flowing southward, and finds himself at the base of the smallest but loftiest of these hillocks, its extreme altitude above the river being one hundred and nineteen feet, and the circuit at the summit two thousand eight hundred and fifty feet. This mound doubtless represents the citadel of Shushan. Close by, on the northeast, rises "a considerable square mass" of some four thousand feet in circuit. Upon this have been discovered foundations of a magnificent hall of columns erected by Darius Hystaspis. To the southeast of these mounds and separated from them by narrow valleys is a great platform of sixty acres, which reaches elevations of from forty to seventy feet, and is three thousand feet long on the east side. These three mounds together form a diamond-shaped block of about four thousand five hundred feet in the length from north to south, and three thousand broad ; having its angles nearly to the cardinal points, and including above one hundred acres of surface. (Rawlinson's Pulpit Commentary on Esth. ix. 6.)

Eastward from this upper city is a lower platform of very irregular shape, about equal in area to the other mounds taken together. These mounds are all embraced in the compass of three miles; but lower elevations are traceable to the east, and within a circuit of seven miles.

Upon the northern mound the excavations of Sir F. Williams and Mr. Loftus, in 1851 and 1852, laid bare the foundations of a hall of thirty-six pillars, flanked on three sides at a distance of sixty-three and one-half feet by double rows of pillars, twelve in each group. The arrangement will be seen from our plan of the north mound. It will be observed by comparison with the plan of Persepolis, that the number of columns and their arrangement is precisely the same as in the famous Chehl Minar, the great hall of Xerxes. This latter structure, according to Flandin and Coste's survey, covers an area of three hundred and fifty-seven and a half feet by two hundred and fifty-four and a half, as against three hundred and forty-five by two hundred and forty-four, the dimensions of the hall at Susa, given by Mr. Loftus.

Trilingual inscriptions found upon pedestals ascribe the erection of the Susanian edifice to Darius Hystaspis. It was doubtless a *hall* for state occasions, in distinction from a *palace*, or place of royal residence; bearing to some royal abode the same relation as the Hall of Xerxes to the Palace of Xerxes at Persepolis (Anc. Mon., Vol. iii. pp. 285, 295). In Mr. Norris's translation of the inscriptions upon the pedestals this structure is called a "temple," and mention is made of the effigies of the gods erected therein, which plainly indicates at least a semi-religious use. The sculptures at Persepolis represent Darius as a pontiff-king (Ker Porter, Travels, Vol. i. pp. 677, 678).

II. THE BERAH.

The expression Shushan the *bērāh* (Shushan the palace, A.V.), occurs ten times in Esther,—Shushan without this adjunct, nine times. A careful examination of this Hebrew word (בְּרָה) will show that its original idea is that of a fortified place, equivalent to the *βάσις* of the Greeks, and the *burg* by which Luther renders the word. *Birs*, e.g. Birs Nimroud, may be a cognate word (Babylon and Persepolis, Rich, p. 73, note). In Nehemiah (ii. 8 ; vii. 2), the fortress of the temple is called "the *berah*." Later the meaning of this word was extended to include such palaces of religion and royalty, with their gardens, areas, and dependent buildings, as were included within walls capable of defence. In this sense the sacred edifice at Jerusalem is called in 1 Chron. xxix. 1, 19. Likewise Josephus speaks of the temple as a

fortress ; for we read (Bell. Jud. v. 5. 8) "the temple was a *fortress* that guarded the city, as was the tower of Antonia a guard to the temple."

In the Book of Esther, at least, *berah* must be capable of a broad application, for it includes the residence of the king, the seat of his government, the place where the representatives of the nation are gathered for consultation and feasting. It contains a royal garden, the buildings of the harem ; and it is within its limits that five hundred enemies of the Jews are slain (ix. 12). But if we are forbidden too narrow an understanding of *berah*, we must also avoid error in the opposite direction. For it seems antecedently unlikely that the term was applied to the whole city, for which "Shushan" alone is used seven times, and "the city Shushan" twice, as an equivalent, in these ten chapters. Occurring sixteen times in the whole Old Testament, certainly in no instance does בָּרָה require so broad a meaning as capital or metropolis. While, therefore, the reasons given forbid our restricting the word to a single building, as has generally been done, it should be understood as used, like "Windsor Castle," for a more or less extensive area, enclosed with walls, and including gardens, besides palaces, temples, and other buildings. *Castle* is a rendering not beyond objection, but used in the broader sense just explained it is the best word we have found.

This fortified royal precinct may have been the palace-mound on the north ; or more probably still, the diamond-shaped space represented by the three considerable mounds already described ; since traces of palaces have been found also upon "the great platform" (Loftus, pp. 352, 401-404, 414). The well-known parallelogram at Persepolis, including its various terraces and numerous buildings, may illustrate such a *berah*, though perhaps protected mainly, or entirely, by retaining walls and scarped faces of rock.

The fortified palace of Babylon is believed to have included various buildings now represented by three immense mounds and numberless smaller elevations, and enclosed by walls the present remains of which are more than six miles in circuit (Ker Porter, Vol. ii. pp. 346, 371, 374). If, according to another view, these walls of Babylon were of later construction, still a very large area upon which the great mounds now stand was covered with palaces, temples, and fortifications. This was "the royal quarter" (Anc. Mon., Vol. ii. p. 530 and note).

A similar area in Shushan, evidently encompassed by a wall of brick, protected by the lofty acropolis at the western angle, and by towers at intervals, and perhaps divided by inner walls, would have

afforded room for the various palaces and buildings of government with their gardens, and for the residence of the officers in waiting upon the royal court with their families and servants. This was Shushan the castle, the upper town, the royal quarter—"Shushan the palace" of the A.V. Here Daniel dwelt (Dan. viii. 2), and at the western foot of the acropolis on the bank of the Shapur is his traditional grave. Here Nehemiah also found a temporary residence (Neh. i. 1). When "the great king" sojourned at Shushan, doubtless many thousand people dwelt within this space, just as during the feasts at Jerusalem prodigious multitudes, living as Orientals can, were able to find room in the holy city. Ctesias tells us (Barnes upon Dan. v. 1) that the king of Persia furnished provisions daily for twenty-five thousand men, all of whom we presume were never at one time resident in the upper city.

Very imposing must have been the appearance of these palace-crowned heights as the traveller approached them over the great plains in the midst of which they stand (Loftus, p. 347; Herodotus, v. 49; also notes upon the latter citation in Rawlinson's ed.). It is further manifest that a castle so lofty and commanding must have proved a stronghold not easily captured, as history records (Polybius, v. 48 end; Conquest of Elam, in History of Asshur-bani-pal.—Geo. Smith).

III. THE BETHAN AND THE BAYITH.

Upon the *berah*, the position and architectural character of only one building have been clearly determined. The great hall upon the north mound was, as has been stated above, almost precisely like the Chehl Minar at Persepolis, except that it was a little smaller. In this fact we find encouragement for the otherwise reasonable opinion that all the buildings erected by Darius and Xerxes at Persepolis and Susa, so far as designed for the same purpose, were similar in their character, and arranged according to the same generic laws of utility and conventionalism. Therefore, from the ruins existing at the eastern capital, we may draw very probable inferences concerning what has perished at Susa.

That the effect of the magnificent groups of columns which formed the great hall or Chehl Minar at Persepolis, was not destroyed by intercolumnar walls seems evident. No remains of stone or brick partitions have been found either in this hall or upon the foundations of the similar one at Susa. Mr. Fergusson believes that there *were* such walls constructed of sun-dried brick (Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis, pp. 144-146), but this theory is sufficiently disproved by

considerations presented in *Anc. Mon.*, Vol. iii. pp. 308–312. (See Loftus, p. 374.) It need not be questioned that the Chehl Minar was a hall of audience, used for state occasions, and that the throne was not at the rear of the front group of pillars,—where, with his views, Mr. Fergusson is obliged to place it,¹—but in the midst of the great central cluster. The general effect of this arrangement is well described by Mr. Rawlinson (*Ib.* p. 312).

The edifice whose foundations have been discovered at Susa was, like its counterpart at Persepolis, a hall for state occasions, and not a palace,—this latter term being reserved for a royal residence. We may confidently believe that somewhere upon the Susanian *berah* there were one or more domiciliary palaces, similar in architecture to those of Darius and Xerxes at the other capital. Stone being much less easily obtainable at Susa, it is possible that these structures were of more perishable material than the Persepolitan; or, if not, the very scarcity of their material exposed them to destruction by subsequent populations. Moreover, a difficulty in the way of their preservation was the absence of a rocky platform beneath them; as well as their exposure to a more vigorous vegetation,—the power of vegetation being, at its weakest, very destructive of the works of man.

Loftus observed traces of a palace upon the great mound (English ed., pp. 401–404); and Strabo says (Book xv. c. iii. § 21, Bohn's translation), “The following, mentioned by Polycletus, are perhaps customary practices: At Susa each king builds in the citadel (*ēm̄ rās ḥ̄kpas*) as memorials of the administration of his government a dwelling for himself, treasure-houses, and magazines for tribute collected (in kind).” It is therefore altogether improbable to suppose that Xerxes dwelt in the hall which his father Darius built, and that neither of these monarchs built here a domiciliary palace, as both did at Persepolis, and as Polycletus says was the practice of each of the Persian kings at this very Susa.

To the Persepolitan palaces (see our plan) we must now turn for a moment. Numerous inscriptions attribute the erection of one of them to Xerxes (*Anc. Mon.*, Vol. iii. p. 293, note 7), and enough of the original partitions of stone remain to determine its general arrangement. Upon the doors and their jambs are toilet-scenes and other domestic representations, which satisfactorily prove the character of this palace. A similar ruin bears the name of Darius, and the domiciliary character of the structure it represents is, in a like manner,

¹ See his Plan in *Anc. Mon.*, Vol. iii. p. 307; also Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, *sub Shushan, Hall of Xerxes*.

attested. These two palaces are similar in plan, but Xerxes', the later, is larger, and is peculiar in one respect,—it is without any rooms *behind* its central hall. This fact finds explanation in the peculiarity of its position. At the time of its erection the platform being crowded, it was necessary to place the building so near the southern edge that there was no room for such apartments, desirable though they evidently would be. It is therefore likely that Xerxes' palace at Susa was without this peculiarity, and was, in general arrangement, like the Persepolitan abode of Darius.

We are now prepared to introduce the narrative of Esther. The feast with which it opens was “in the court of the garden of the king's palace.” “Palace” here, is *bēthān*, a word which occurs only in Esther. Fuerst counts it of Old Persian origin. But, if so, its obvious resemblance in Hebrew to *bayith*, the ordinary term for palace in Esther and the Old Testament, renders likely the relationship of these two words. *Bethan* perhaps designates a *bayith* of special size or magnificence. Can we doubt that such a feast as this would be held near the finest building at Susa, the palace of royal audience? May we not very safely identify the *bethan* with the great hall of Susa? and thus locate “the court of the garden” near this edifice, on the east or the west side,—of which conjectures the former seems to us preferable.

This word, *bethan*, occurs in only one other passage,—in chap. vii. 7, 8. Esther's banquet was held in a *bayith*, which may have been a portion of the seraglio building or a separate edifice. This hall or *bayith*, whatever and wherever it were, evidently opened directly into the garden of the *bethan*; for we read that the king in his wrath against Haman (literally) arose into “the garden of the palace” (*bethan*). The king stepped out into the cool air of the adjacent paradise to calm his mind, and consider what should be done with his grand vizier. This house of the banquet, then, was within, or adjacent to, the garden of the *bethan*; perhaps in the rear of the great hall, and we may suppose that the garden encompassed at least three sides of that imposing edifice. The word under consideration does not again occur in Esther, and there is no reason to suppose that any other of the recorded events had direct connection with the hall of Darius.

Bayith is found more than twenty times in Esther, where it plainly denotes the king's palace or residence, or the various departments or buildings of the royal seraglio (e.g. ii. 13, 14). With the possible exception of Xerxes' second feast (i. 5) which was in the garden of the *bethan*, every event of the book in which the king is present is located in a *bayith*, and apparently with one or two exceptions in the same

bayith, the palace or residence, a building doubtless much like the palace of Darius at Persepolis in its general arrangement.

For reasons given above, the hall of Esther's banquet must have been located not far from the *bethan*. Whether this hall (*bayith*) were a part of the harem or were a separate building,—a kiosk perhaps,—Oriental customs and proprieties lead to the conclusion that it was not far from the houses of the women, and these again not far from the king's house. Thus, none of these buildings were far from the *bethan*; and if this latter be the hall of Darius, as we have concluded, all these residences were upon the north mound or near it, being connected with it, perhaps, by bridges, if upon the edge of adjacent mounds, as however seems unlikely. The palace of Xerxes was probably in the rear of the columnar hall, whose site has been recovered, or else to the right or left of such a position (Loftus, p. 376).

Since the foundations of one remarkable hall have been discovered at Susa, it has been the common practice to locate therein most of the royal scenes of this book. This is natural, pleasant, desirable, if consistent with likelihood. But we submit that both philological and archaeological considerations forbid. Indeed, our conception of the magnificence of Xerxes is lowered, if we imagine the great hall to have been at the same time the palace of state, of feasting, and of residence.

IV. THE KING'S GATE AND THE COURTS.

Most palaces of ancient Assyria and Persia were fronted at some distance by smaller structures called *propylons*. Ruins of four of these are found upon the platform at Persepolis, showing that they there consisted of a square hall enclosing a group of four pillars. Such a propylon undoubtedly faced the Hall of Darius at Susa, standing upon the north edge of the mound at a distance of one hundred and fifty feet, or more, and perhaps located as in our plan of the north mound. Without doubt there was also a propylon in front of the palace of Xerxes.

Probably at Susa the gateway was not *through* the propylon, but *beside* it, as illustrated in Mr. Fergusson's plan of Solomon's palace, found in Smith's Bible Dictionary, under Palace,—the hall of judgment there, being a propylon beside the main entrance. The structures of which we are speaking, in Persia at least, were doubtless intended for court-rooms, and for places of occasional royal audience.

"The gate of the king," as mentioned in Esther, was (A) a place of official duty (ii. 19, 21; vi. 10, 12). We observe (vi. 10) that the king

knew where Mordecai was to be found. (B) Guards (iv. 2) were stationed here. (C) A number of the king's servants (iii. 2) were to be found at this gate. (D) It was the ordinary way to and from the royal presence, for the prime minister (iii. 4; v. 9, 13), and apparently the only public entrance (iv. 2) to the royal grounds. (E) It faced upon the street, or "square," of the city (iv. 1, 2, 6).

That this "gate" was a propylon, or rather included a propylon, and often designated the court held therein is universally agreed. "To sit in the gate of the king" plainly indicates some official position in this supreme tribunal. This gate may be identified with that propylon which doubtless stood upon the north edge of the north mound, and which might well have served as the entrance to the *berah*, and the royal precincts in general. Or the chief propylon and gate of the palace may have been located upon the eastern edge of the royal grounds. For, wherever the palace stood, it need not necessarily have faced as did the hall of Darius, nor need its propylon have stood exactly in front. None of the propylons at Persepolis are true to such a position,—convenience or other considerations evidently drawing them to one side or the other. That of the Hall of One Hundred Columns perhaps stands behind its principal (Anc. Mon., Vol. iii. p. 297). It may have been considered more important to secure a nearly central position for the gateway than for the court-room.

Having considered a different view, "the gate of the king" as used in Esther still seems to the writer always to indicate the same, and a definitely known locality. Of course, when the monarch was at Persepolis or Ecbatana his supreme court would accompany him, and occupy new quarters near the palaces of those places. But while at Susa, is it not natural that the court should have its fixed place of session either in the northern propylon or in the propylon of the palace, which propylon was so located as to stand near some edge, probably the eastern, of the *berah*? (See note on ii. 19; and Ferguson's art. Shushan, in Smith's Bib. Dict.).

The most difficult of all our problems now remains to be briefly considered: What were the outer and inner courts of the king's house to which there is reference in iv. 11; v. 1, 2; vi. 4, 5? If we could understand these courts to be respectively, the front porch and the inner columnar hall of such a palace as Darius's at Persepolis, all would be plain. In that palace the throne was located against the centre of the rear wall. If Esther had entered such an inner columnar hall she would have stood over against the king's house (v. 1). For, while in a general sense, the whole palace was his house, in a secon-

dary and specific sense the apartments to the rear, which were especially his residence, were his house (Fergusson, Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis, 119). The king sat upon his throne opposite the entrance (doorway, **הַרְבָּעָה**) through which the queen had just passed. He extended toward Esther the sceptre and she drew near, passing up the central columnar aisle. So in vi. 4, the king in the stillness of morning, though he could not see Haman in the outer court, would, in such reverberating halls, hear him impatiently moving about the pavement, or perhaps questioning the guards, and this with special ease, since the doorways were closed by nothing more impervious than hangings.

A serious objection to this view is the probability that these halls were roofed, and hence would be called by a Jew *porches* (**כִּנְסִים**), or were something other than courts, which ordinarily, if not always, imply spaces open to the sky. But it may be that *court* had come to be loosely used as the best word afforded by the meagre supply of architectural terms. The great height of these columnar rooms, and their uses, might have led to the employment of this term. Certainly the inner hall was not a portico, and *house* (**מִשְׁׁבֵּת**) could not be used for every part of these structures when distinction was necessary. If we believe, with Loftus and others, that these columnar groups were roofless, the difficulty vanishes. A second supposition might be that the buildings were arranged somewhat as in Sargon's palace at Khorsabad. (Anc. Mon., Vol. i. p. 281; History of Art in Chaldea and Assyria, Perrot and Chipiez, Vol. ii. pp. 20-27.) There must have been at least this difference in detail, however, that "the king's house" and his throne (v. 1) were opposite the entrance to the "inner court." Such an explanation, of course, assumes an Assyrian rather than a Persian style of palace. The difficulty of obtaining stone at Shushan, and the greater proximity of Assyrian types might account for such an anomaly in architecture. It is, moreover, probable that the Persian kings when dwelling at Babylon were able to endure residence in palaces very unlike those at Persepolis in respect to arrangement: why not so at Susa?

Mr. Fergusson's view (art. Shushan, Smith's Bib. Dict.) is, that the inner court extended from the north portico of the hall of Darius to the propylon facing that hall, and that the outer court was outside this propylon, upon a platform now crumbled away. This view assumes that the throne was placed in the northern portico of the hall; and,—unless we make this hall a royal residence,—encounters difficulty in the case of Haman (chap. vi.). It demands an entirely

different conception of the topography from that presented in this excursus.

On the whole, of all the views he has examined, the writer prefers the one first given ; unless we may combine that with the second, and suppose that there were Persian palaces grouped in Assyrian arrangement with courts between. In this case the expression "opposite the entrance" (v. 1), still seems to demand that the central columnar hall be the inner court.

The following explanation is that of my co-laborer, Dr. Street, which I present in his own words, leaving the reader to take his choice of these various hypotheses.

We have in the book of Esther the proof of a royal seraglio of great extent. The queen had her establishment, magnificent enough to admit of her giving a banquet for the king and his retinue of attendants ; then there was *the first house of the women*, and *the second house of the women*, and *the king's house*. All these pertained to the king's private, or domestic, or family establishment. These buildings would naturally, almost certainly, enclose a court (ii. 11). This court, we may assume, was large enough to include the space known as *the inner court of the king's house*. This latter space was very probably a nook, or rectangular recess, or projection of the great domestic court, so laid out as to present a field for an outlook from the throne that would be worthy of the royal magnificence ; beautiful in its array of fountains and palms and flowers, of every hue and every fragrance. This *inner court of the king's house* afforded a way of access to the king that was designed for use. Two ways of using it are made known to us. First, it was used at the *call*, or summons, of the king (ii. 14, and iv. 11). Secondly, it might be used without such summons, but at great risk of life. The intruder, whoever he might be, — any one who ventured by the way of that court, *uncalled*, — was met by the executioners who were always at hand, and were required by law to do their work of death at once, unless the king interfered by *holding forth the golden sceptre*.

This was the law for *the inner court*. It was not the law for *the outer court*. One point more. The queen had no access to the king but by the way of *the inner court*. We gather from this that *the inner court* was the way, and the only way, of communication between the monarch and his harem. He could send for any member of it at any time (iv. 11), so that the law created no obstruction for him. On the other hand, they were so numerous that it was necessary to create

obstructions for them, or the king would be annoyed beyond endurance.¹ This restriction could not be regarded as a hardship in such a condition of society, for there was a system of domestic police in the harem. Each of the two *houses of the women* had their *keepers*, and there were eunuchs of high and low degree; and all disagreements could be disposed of within the establishment. If individuals wanted any favor, or redress of grievances, they had only to apply to those who were set over them. There might be extreme cases in which they would prefer to risk everything, even life itself, in an appeal to the king. Such cases were provided for in the well-understood regulation that gave a dim hope of *the reaching forth of the golden sceptre*.

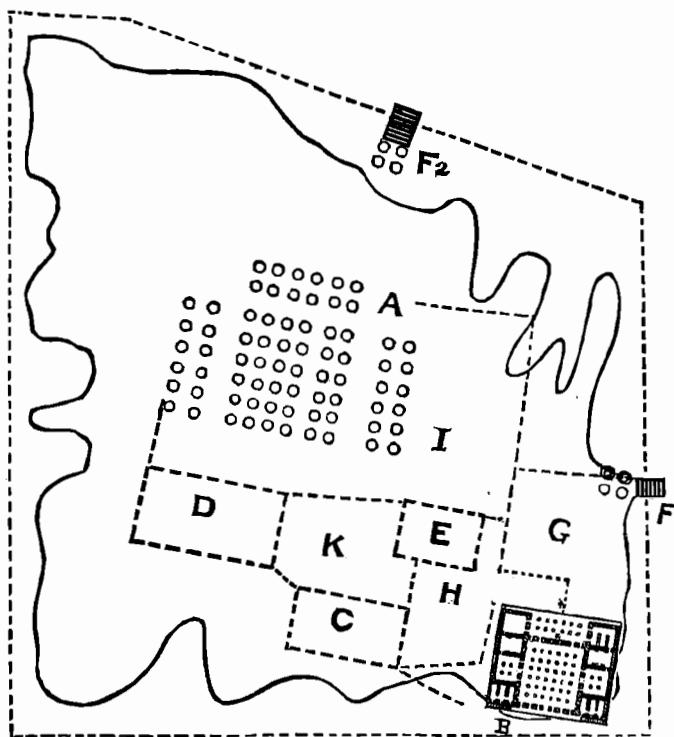
It was necessary, moreover, to create a formidable barrier against disguised assassins who might otherwise avail themselves of this way of approach to the king. For the seraglio was by no means cut off from communication with the outside world (ii. 11, and iv. 4-10). The harem was the monarch's little private realm, governed by a special code suited exclusively to that realm. Hence, there was one law for this smaller domestic realm, and another for the kingdom. The king's family was in this respect as far as possible like any other family of distinction.

But why should this law of the harem be made known (iv. 11) through all the empire? We answer, both for the king's safety, and for the safety of his subjects. Messengers were constantly arriving from the most distant provinces, and plots were as likely to be matured there as nearer the capital; and there was always the possibility of blunders that might cost many an innocent man his life. The very form in which the law is stated shows that it was possible for intruders to find their way into *the inner court*. *The inner court* pertained to the ornamental grounds of the palace, and was a part of the setting that gave effect to its magnificence. Of course it must be open to view, and the easy possibility of abuse must be remedied by some such provision of law as is here set forth. It remains to suggest how *the inner court* may have been topographically situated with reference to *the outer court*.

The accompanying diagram (p. 107) with a few words of explanation will make the view which is here advocated plain.

We are at liberty, taking the palace of Xerxes at Persepolis as our model, in part, to assume either a northern or western portico for the king's morning receptions. We follow Loftus in supposing that portions

¹ See an incident, entitled "Besieged by a Harem," in Loftus, p. 394.



EXPLANATION.

The dotted line around the mound represents the original edge before it had been washed or worn away. The dotted lines enclosing G, H, and K, are the conjectural boundaries of the courts named below.

- A the Great Hall of Xerxes or the Bethan (i. 5).
- B the palace of Xerxes (ii. 16).
- C the first house of the women (ii. 13).
- D the second house of the women (ii. 14).
- E the queen's house (v. 4 and vii. 1).
- F the propylon, or king's gate (v. 9).
- F₂ the propylon of the great hall.
- G the outer court (vi. 5).
- H the inner court (v. 1).
- I the garden of the Bethan (vii. 7, 8).
- K the court of the house of the women (ii. 11).
- * place of the throne in the throne-porch. — *Fergusson.*
- † supposed position of the queen in the inner court when the golden sceptre was extended.

of these structures were not provided with massive roofs, but arranged for woven canopies instead. A large use was also made of *hangings* and *curtains*. The inner court was probably separated from the outer by a row of wooden pillars with their *hangings* of *byssus*. The position of the twelve pillars indicated in the above diagram,¹ may show the area of one of the porticos of the palace or *king's house* which we assume after Fergusson (p. 183, Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis) to have answered to the modern throne-room. The *throne* (*) would have an outlook into both courts; the queen entering the *inner court*, and taking her position at (†) would be *over against*, or *in front of the king's house*; and the king *on his royal throne, in the royal house*, would be *opposite*, or looking toward the gate, or *entrance of the house*. ַתְּבָנָה is variously rendered "entrance," "entry," "entering in," "door," and "gate." It is once used to denote the mouth of a cave, and more than sixty times to denote the way of admission to a tent or tabernacle. There is no reason why we should not understand it here of an opening or entrance between the rows of pillars, before which hangings or curtains of *byssus*, attached by silver rings to the front pillars were partly gathered back, as at the entrance of a tent. Esther would be face to face with the king; and diagonal glances across the inter-columnar spaces would show the figure of Haman as he walked up and down in the *outer court*.

The only difficulty that remains is that of locating the buildings on the *berah*. In this we have nothing to restrict us in the present state of our knowledge but the requirements of the narrative, the ascertained position of the great hall, the form of the *berah*, and the probabilities derived from the known arrangement of the palaces at Persepolis. All writers are agreed in assigning to the royal buildings a place on the *berah* at a suitable distance in a southerly direction from the great hall. If we assume that the palace of Xerxes and its propylon were the most easterly of the group, placing the propylon, as at Persepolis, considerably to the east of the north and south line drawn through the centre of the palace, we shall meet all the requirements of the narrative, and the dimensions of the *berah* are ample. It may perhaps render some things easier of explanation if it be borne in mind that *the king's gate* is probably a generic phrase denoting either of the propylons that were in use at any given time; that pertaining to the great hall being used only on special occasions of public interest and display. Mordecai's place as *sitting in the king's gate* would be either in the one or the other as the occasion demanded.

¹ Copied from the northern portico of the palace of Xerxes at Persepolis.

As to propylons, there is so general an agreement among authors at the present time in assuming a propylon for the great hall, and another for the palace of Xerxes, and in making the latter identical with בֵּבֶשׂ הַצְּדָקָה *the king's gate*, that this point need not be argued here. In the architecture of Jerusalem where there is no evidence that any *propylon* existed, Bonomi assumes that the king's court was identical with the king's gate ; “the gate of judgment, the porch for the throne where he might judge, even the porch of judgment” (1 Kings vii. 7). “It was in a court or gate of this kind, called תְּרִזָּה (*teragn*), gate, in the royal abode of Babylon, that in after times the prophet Daniel sat where Nebuchadnezzar had made him שָׁלֹשָׁה, the Sultan, or ruler over the whole province, מִדְּרָשׁ, medinet, of Babylon, and the רַבִּי-סִגְנֵן, Rab Signeen (Grand Signor), the chief of the (princes) governors over all the wise men חֲכִימִים, Hakims, of Babylon” (Dan. ii. 48, 49).

“Most of these words,” says Bonomi, “are now current in the country ; so that if we were to write them in Arabic characters, an Arab could read and comprehend them” (p. 176 ; p. 155, revised ed.).

“The propylaeum (at Persepolis) stands at the distance of forty-five feet from the head of the stairway, and symmetrically with the centre of it ; but it is not in the centre of the great hall, nor nearly so (Fergusson, Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis, p. 106).

“From what we know of the buildings at Persepolis, we may assert, almost with certainty, that the ‘king's gate’ where Mordecai sat, and where so many of the transactions of the Book of Esther took place, was a square hall (wood cut No. 5), measuring probably a little more than one hundred feet each way, and with its roof supported by four pillars in the centre ; and that this stood at a distance of one hundred and fifty or two hundred feet from the front of the northern portico, where its remains will probably now be found when looked for” (Fergusson, in Smith's Bible Dict., iv. 3026).

NOTE.—As to the meaning of the word *berah*, see “Hebrew Language viewed in the light of Assyrian Research,” by Dr. Friedrich Delitzsch (Williams and Norgate, 1883), pp. 22, 23, note.

EXCURSUS C.

THE PAVEMENT AND ITS COMPONENTS.¹

הַמְּצָבָה (LXX, λαθόστρωτον) doubtless means a pavement of some sort. But its particular nature is of importance towards the translation of the following words. It will hardly be denied that, if not in all instances, at least as applied to Solomon's Temple (2 Chron. vii. 3), it means a pavement of stones of considerable size. If this were so in the case before us, such materials as pearls are out of the question, and the varied coloring of a mosaic need not be insisted upon. Floors of slabs and large bricks have often been found at Nineveh, Babylon, Persepolis, and other locations in Assyria and Persia (Anc. Mon., Vol. i. pp. 279, 282; Ker Porter's Travels in Persia, Vol. i. pp. 587, 699; Layard, Nineveh and its Remains, Vol. i. p. 343; Vol. ii. pp. 126, 261; Loftus, Chaldea and Susiana, p. 396). It appears that the Babylonian palaces were mainly paved with burnt brick, since stone was scarce, as at Susa. Such pavement slabs as have been found at the former city are about twenty inches square (Anc. Mon., Vol. iii. p. 388, and footnote). An illustration of the beautiful designs sometimes chiselled upon them may be found in Anc. Mon., Vol. i. p. 279.

Layard tells us (Nineveh and its Remains, Vol. ii. p. 183) that the Persians closely imitated the Assyrians in all their customs. Moreover, there was beauty to the ancients in a pavement of polished slabs (e.g. Josephus, Bell. Jud., v. 5, 8). In the case before us, admiration would also be excited by the fact that all the stones of Susa, like those of Babylon, must have been conveyed over alluvial plains from a distance,—thirty miles in the case of Susa (Loftus, p. 376). The writer cannot learn of the discovery or unequivocal record of a tessellated pavement (i.e. one of small pieces) constructed so early as Xerxes. It is not probable that such a refinement existed among the Jews previous to their conquest by the Romans who especially delighted in that sort of work, having developed an art which they received from the Greeks (Pliny, Nat. Hist., xxxvi. 60 (25)).

We have picked up from the soil of Jerusalem numbers of the tesserae said to have paved the courts of Herod's temple, and perhaps also Gabbatha (John xix. 13). If similar geometric solids were used to cover the ample area of Xerxes' court, why has not one of the vast number necessary ever been found? Or, if this flooring were a true mosaic of precious materials, why has no fragment ever attracted notice

in the excavations? But that all *slabs* whenever uncovered should be carried away for building purposes is exactly what occurs in the case of every Oriental ruin.

Further, unless this were a pavement of the Assyrian type, three of its materials could not have been white or nearly so (see the renderings of Fuerst and Gesenius in our Table), nor hardly two of them, as most commentators understand. When Orientals attempt colored designs, their taste for brilliancy forbids a lavish use of pale tints (Layard, Nineveh and Babylon, pp. 166, 167, 507, 531; Loftus, pp. 396, 397; Anc. Mon., Vol. ii. p. 557; Fergusson, Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis, pp. 124, 353, especially 154; Fergusson's History of Architecture, Vol. ii. pp. 552, 558).

Shāsh.—Passing to the materials of the pavement, let us first consider the second, **שָׁשֶׁת**, the only one of the four whose name occurs elsewhere, either in Esther or the other books of the Old Testament. The LXX gives us no aid here. Indeed, in some clauses of the present description, it seems to have abandoned the labor of translation, and with free fancy given its own picture of a beautiful Oriental banqueting hall. Nearly all scholars unite in rendering *shāsh*, “white marble” (see Table at close of this Excursus). True, from the generic manner in which the Hebrews employed scientific terms, there is opportunity to argue for some other material or color. Thus, a cognate word, **שְׁלֵמָה**, lily, must mean in Cant. v. 13, some flower of a red color, and doubtless often denotes a purple iris (Gesenius, Lexicon *sub voce*); being evidently used generically for flowers of various brilliant hues. **שָׁשֶׁת** itself was the material—probably a white limestone—of which Solomon's Temple was largely built (Smith's Bib. Dict., art. Marble). And here, the material being the same with the pillars mentioned above,—if the feast was held within the porticos already discovered at Shushan,—the term seems necessarily to mean blue limestone (blue marble A.V.); for the columns discovered at Shushan, with the slabs on which they stand, are of this material (Loftus, p. 376 note; Rawlinson, in Speaker's Com. and Pulpit Com. *in loco*). If, then, the feast were held in the discovered palace, **שָׁשֶׁת** in this place means blue limestone, as Rawlinson holds.

But we consider the court of the garden to be some other locality (see i. 5 in commentary), in which pillars of white marble were temporarily or permanently erected. And in this connection, it is interesting to observe that the tombs of Daniel, and of two Moslem saints near Shushan, are “built of bricks, with small capitals of white marble from the ruins” (Loftus, p. 346). Major Rawlinson also observed the

same or similar capitals (Journal of London Geog. Soc., Vol. ix. pp. 69, 70). When we remember also what extensive use was made of white marble in other Persian architecture of about this period (e.g. at Persepolis and Morgaûl), and observe the general agreement that this rendering of white marble comports best with the strict etymology of the word, we need hardly question further the meaning of 𐎢𐎰.

We pass now to words concerning which Rawlinson himself observes, “to identify the stones, or even their colors, is difficult.”

Bā'�at.—The first of the four is 𐎢𐎰, which the LXX and Vulgate translate “emerald-like stone,” and conformably to this, Bertheau, Keil, and Lange think it may be “malachite” or “serpentine”; Rawlinson, some “green stone, probably”; the A. V., “red marble”; Fuerst, “alabaster”; Gesenius, “white marble” or “imitation marble.” As to “malachite,” even if sufficient quantities were then obtainable, it may be questioned whether it would not be too brittle for a pavement (Appleton's Am. Cyclopaedia, art. Copper). “Serpentine,”—verd-antique,—when polished *feigns* the appearance of very beautiful marble of a mottled green, but is *deceitful* in its wearing properties (Dana's System of Mineralogy, 1869, p. 468). It is found in Persia, and might have been used in large pieces, and of the specific minerals suggested seems the most probable. The mineral relics of Shushan, which Loftus mentions as found upon or near the mounds, are white marble capitals (p. 346), a slab of red sandstone (p. 408), vases of Oriental alabaster (p. 409), a piece of polished basalt (p. 408), slabs and columns of blue limestone (pp. 408, 376), a column base of coarse yellow limestone (p. 404), and a trough of the same (p. 415).

As a contribution to the discussion of the subject, the following suggestions are made. 𐎢𐎰 is generally referred to a root meaning *to lie, to feign.* Hence the rendering *false, or imitation, stone* (Gesenius). But *false stone* might mean painted slabs or tesserae. The application of color to *bas reliefs*, and other stone surfaces in ancient Assyrian architecture is well-known. Moreover, the Persians at this time must have been familiar with the painted walls of Egypt.

Again, it might be argued that 𐎢𐎰 means painted brick. 𐎢𐎰 being the generic word for brick, whether sun-dried or burned, it would not be strange to find a specific word for the burned and painted article. Enamelled brick, though used abundantly for walls, would hardly be mingled with unglazed stone in a pavement (Fergusson, Nineveh and Persepolis, p. 124). Champollion and Rossellini have given specimens of ancient Egyptian floors of painted tile or brick (McClintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia, art. Brick), and Cambyses' conquest, and the

intercourse with Egypt which it opened, must have familiarized the Persians with such structures, while Xerxes' army (note on i. 3) may have brought anew to Persia the art, if not the artisans. Pavements of burnt brick, we have already observed, were the rule in the palaces of Babylon, and the chambers at Khorsabad were floored with the unburned variety (Fergusson, Nineveh and Persepolis, p. 111). If painted, these bricks would not have been unworthy the royal courts of Persia. Indeed, Loftus (p. 396) uncovered a pavement of brick upon the northern mound of Shushan which he describes as "evidently connected with the palace, probably a court"; and bricks of every sort, principally derived of course from the ancient walls, are abundantly scattered over the mounds. Rawlinson tells us (Anc. Mon., Vol. iii. p. 311, and note) that no *enamelled* brick of Achaemenian times has been found in Persia. But this does not forbid the use of painted brick in a single pavement at Susa.

According to our ideas of royalty, malachite better comports with the palaces of Xerxes than painted brick; yet we must not let our visions of royal magnificence run away with us, but should remember that these ancient monarchs were very familiar even with walls and floors of adobe. And that the first of the four materials of this pavement should be the least costly would not be strange.

But our latest conviction is that the word refers to blue limestone. Attention has already been invited by this excursus (p. 111) to the fact that slabs of such stone are found upon the mounds, and that the columns of the great hall were not only of this material, but rested upon blocks of it. Moreover, as seen in Esther viii. 15, blue in its different shades was a favorite color with the Persians,—indeed a royal color. (See History of Art in Chaldaea and Assyria, Perrot and Chipiez, Vol. i. p. 289.)

No other of these four terms seems so likely to denote a material which would almost certainly have been employed. There is, it must be confessed, at present little philological ground for this interpretation, or, indeed, for any other! The word may represent some Persian name, or refer to some "deceitful" peculiarity of working (e.g. cherty, Loftus, p. 343), or to the fading of the color common in this material; but, as stated above, *bahat* seems likely to have been blue limestone.

Där.—The second element of the pavement, *shâsh*, we have considered. The third was **תְּבַשֵּׁשׁ**. Michaelis, as the A.V. (margin), renders this "alabaster"; most authorities "pearly-stone," "pearl" or "mother-of-pearl." The word is commonly derived from **תְּבַשֵּׁשׁ**, *to shine* (Fuerst) or *to glance, glitter* (Gesenius). Many kinds of alabaster are pearly,

bright, even glittering, at least when freshly quarried. Layard reminds us (*Nineveh and its Remains*, Vol. ii. p. 313) that alabaster was “the common pavement stone of the Assyrians.” It is still thus used for the halls of Bagdad. Not to find a material, so abundantly employed in the palaces of Nineveh and Babylon, among the materials here mentioned would be surprising. We therefore believe קְרֵב to have been alabaster, in some form.

To some it may occur that this stone was “oriental alabaster,”—scientifically stalagmite, a variety of calcite, and not alabaster at all. For stalagmite when polished discovers a beautiful undulatory zoning which considerably resembles the flight of the swallow, a bird called קְרֵב in Hebrew, from the verb קָרַב, now before us, in the sense of *to circle*. The veining of “oriental alabaster” might well entitle it to the name קְרֵב in this meaning. Pliny says of *alabastritis*, which we identify with “oriental alabaster”: “that which is of a honey color is the most esteemed, covered with spots curling in whirls, and not transparent” (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, xxxvi. 12. Compare-Dana’s System of Mineralogy, 1869, pp. 640, 679). The vases of this material which Mr. Loftus found upon the mounds of Shushan (p. 409) are pronounced by Dr. Birch to have been formed from the stone of the celebrated quarry at Tel-el-Amarna in Egypt, but it seems unlikely that pavement slabs were obtained from such a distance.

Sochereth.—שְׁקוּרֶת yet remains. Some excellent authorities derive this word from שְׁקָרֶת, in the sense of קְרֵב, *to be black*, and render it “black stone” or “black marble.” (See Lange and Bertheau, *in loco*.) Fuerst, however, prefers “red marble,” taking שְׁקָרֶת in the unused meaning, *to be red*, for which he suggests cognates in Arabic. Gesenius, followed by others, derives שְׁקוּרֶת from שְׁקוּרָה, *a shield*, and the latter from שְׁקָר in the employed sense, *to go about, to surround*,—“stone with shield-like spots,” “spotted marble.” According to such a view, although it has not been suggested by these authors, this material might be the “stone full of shells” having “a very pleasing appearance” of which Layard found six polished slabs at Kouyunjik (*Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 446; *Nineveh and its Remains*, Vol. ii. p. 276), and which Xenophon described as forming the walls of Mespila (*Nineveh*) to the height of fifty feet (*Anabasis*, iii. 4, 10; *Anc. Mon.*, Vol. i. pp. 321, 322), which, moreover, is sufficiently abundant in that locality to be the common building stone of Mosul (Ainsworth’s *Travels in the Track of the Ten Thousand*, p. 140).

If this were a dark mineral we may remember that Layard found at Khorsabad a small structure entirely constructed of black marble

(Nineveh and Babylon, p. 130), a material of which portions are often found in the Assyrian ruins. Or this dark stone may have been basalt, which abounds in the Koordish Hills and elsewhere in Western Asia. The pavement of the temple at Khorsabad, as well as the whole edifice, is of this material (Fergusson, Nineveh and Persepolis, pp. 294, 295). A polished piece of basalt was found by Loftus (p. 408) at Shushan, and various monuments of this same rock were observed by Layard (Nineveh and its Remains, Vol. ii. p. 316). The "black stone" with which Josephus tells us Solomon paved the royal road to Jerusalem, "to manifest the grandeur of his riches and his government," was probably basalt, which abounds in the Hauran, and is to-day everywhere counted one of the best materials for this purpose (Josephus, Antiq., viii. 7. 4; Smith's Bib. Dict., *sub* Marble).

A slab of red sandstone found upon the mounds (Loftus, p. 408) suggests the availability of that material. Such stone would be more easily worked than basalt, would contribute a more cheerful tone to the pavement, and would consort with Fuerst's derivation of the word. Red was a favorite color with the Assyrians. (Perrot and Chipiez, *ut supra*, Vol. i. p. 280.)

We therefore suggest that these four materials were, in the order of the text, *blue stone, white marble, alabaster, and red stone*. One advantage of this rendering is, that all these materials have in some shape been found upon the mounds, and are thus proved to have been, in a measure, available. They are all suitable for such a purpose. It may have been a wonder enough to see a pavement all the components of which must have been brought from a great distance.

As in the discovered temple of Shushan pillars of blue limestone rest upon slabs of the same, so it is possible that in this summer palace the pillars of white marble rested upon slabs of the same, while the other materials formed the remaining pavement. That much of this material should not be discoverable, after the slight explorations yet made, is due to the fact that for many centuries subsequent to the reign of Xerxes there were towns upon these mounds largely built of the ruins, which towns were successively destroyed by conflagration or otherwise, thus causing the gradual crumbling of some material and the burial of other. And now for many centuries of our era, every considerable fragment of stone found in all these plains has been eagerly carried away for the construction of neighboring villages.

HEBREW.	A. V.	A. V. MARGIN.	FEUERST.	GESENIUS.	LXX.	VULGATE	BERTHEAU.	KEIL.	LANGE.	RAWLINSON.
בָּבֶת Babat.	Red marble.	Porphyre	Alabaster.	A species of <i>marble</i> used for pavements; either perhaps <i>white marble</i> , or <i>imitation marble</i> ; so called as feigning the appearance of marble; derived from an obsolete verb cognate either with an Arabic word, <i>to lie, to feign</i> , or with Aramaic or Hebrew words, <i>to be white, shining</i> .	σμαραγδίτον λίθον, emerald-like stone.	Smargdino.	Malachite, or serpentine, perhaps.	Malachite, or serpentine, probably.	Falso stone, malachite, or serpentine perhaps.	Green, probably.
שְׁשָׁה Shash.	Blue marble.	Marble.	White marble, from <i>shâsh</i> , <i>to shine, to glister, to lighten</i> .	White marble. Same derivation as Fuerst.	πεύκλιον, pearly (stone).	(Wanting).	White marble.	White marble.	White marble.	White.
דָּר Där.	White marble.	Alabaster	A pearl, perhaps pearl stone, or mother-of-pearl, from <i>דָּר</i> , <i>to shine</i> .	Commonly taken as a <i>pearl</i> , perhaps a species of marble resembling pearl; perhaps a kind of alabaster called <i>mother-of-pearl stone</i> , or, possibly, <i>mother-of-pearl</i> itself. Same derivation as Fuerst.	Παρίον λίθον, Parian stone. (By some this term is supposed to represent the <i>shash</i> , while πεύκλιον represents the <i>där</i> , there being a transposition. See Smith's Bible Dict., <i>s. v. Marble</i> , note a.) We follow the natural order.	Pario lapido.	Mother-of-pearl, perhaps.	Pearl-like, perhaps mother-of-pearl.	A pearly stone, perhaps mother-of-pearl.	Pearl-colored.
סָהָרָת Soche-reth.	Black marble.	Stone of blue color.	A sort of precious <i>red marble</i> , or, better, marble marked with round spots like shields, <i>spotted</i> or <i>shielded marble</i> . Tortoise shell would hardly be interspersed in a pavement with various kinds of marble. From, or allied to, סָהָר, a shield.	A species of <i>black marble</i> , or, better, marble marked with round spots like shields, <i>spotted</i> or <i>shielded marble</i> . Tortoise shell would hardly be interspersed in a pavement with various kinds of marble. From, or allied to, סָהָר, a shield.	(Wanting).	(Wanting).	Black stone or black marble.	Black; black marble with shield-like spots.	Black marble with scutiform spots, very likely. From <i>sahar</i> = <i>shahar</i> , dark.	Spotted, or black.

EXCURSUS D.

THE LETTERS AND POSTS OF THE ANCIENTS.¹

There is reference in the Book of Esther to the first postal service worthy of the name concerning which we have any definite knowledge. (See i. 22; iii. 13, 15; viii. 10, 14; Rollin's Anc. Hist., Bk. 4, chap. 4, art. 1, sec. 4.) Jeremiah (li. 31) refers to some such system among the Assyrians, and it is likely that from the earliest ages kings and men of power made provision for the rapid conveyance of their messages.

In Palestine and other mountainous countries this was done by fleet footmen. Some rulers provided themselves with a corps of those who were qualified by nature and practice to become such messengers. Pliny (as quoted in Dunglison's Physiology, Vol. ii. p. 249) says that excision of the spleen was performed on runners as beneficial to their wind.

There is record of those who travelled on foot from Tyre to Jerusalem, one hundred miles, in twenty-four hours; and we read that some could accomplish so much as one hundred and fifty miles during the same period of time. (Barnes on Job ix. 25.) These professional footmen were well known in the time of Job, whose language is: "Are not my days swifter than a post (lit. *runner*)?" Saul, the first Hebrew king, had an organized body of "footmen" (margin, as original, *runners*), in which respect he doubtless followed the usual custom of kings. Under our English reading "guard" we find these runners to have been a regular corps in the armies of succeeding Hebrew monarchs. Hence the allusion of Jeremiah: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?"

Among nations richer in swift beasts, and dwelling in a less mountainous country than the Jews, the runner, doubtless from earliest times, ran with other legs than his own. But the only word used in the Bible for such couriers, whether mounted or not, is the one of which we have spoken, and which is often translated "posts." This latter English term, coming from the Latin, originally meant the house or station whence relays of horses were obtained, and where couriers might lodge. Such an original meaning of the word is almost lost to us, though remaining in the expression "military post."

The Persian postal system was established by Cyrus the Great during a reign continuing from 559 to 529 B.C. It was greatly improved by Darius, to whom some even ascribe its origination. (Rawlinson, Anc. Mon., Vol. iii. p. 426.) Herodotus (viii. 98) gives the credit to

¹ Esther i. 22; iii. 13, 15.

Xerxes. This latter monarch in the earlier years of his reign devoted himself to the thorough organization and the general improvement of his realm. He perceived that the peace and permanency of his rule would be greatly enhanced by quick communication between himself and all parts of his vast empire, that he might thus have prompt and frequent reports from every officer of his government, and be able speedily to transmit his own directions and decrees. Thus only he could have "well in hand" an empire of twenty satrapies and one hundred and twenty-seven districts, extending from India to Ethiopia.

Accordingly, he established post-houses along the chief lines of travel at intervals of about fourteen miles, according to the average capacity of a horse to gallop at his best speed without stopping. At each of these there were maintained by state a number of couriers and several relays of horses. One of these horsemen receiving an official document rode at utmost speed to the next post-house, whence it was taken onward by another horse, and perhaps by a new courier. Ballantine (*Midnight Marches Through Persia*) states that at the present day a good horseman of that country will often travel one hundred and twenty miles or more each day for ten or twelve days consecutively. (Upon this general subject, besides references already given, see *Cyropaedia*, viii. 6.)

Such was the method of transmitting messages existing in the time of Xerxes and Esther, and in our day still employed by the government of Persia, and, under substantially the same form, in thinly settled regions of Russia, and other countries. This system was adopted with some improvements by the Greeks and Romans, and transmitted to the nations of western Europe, with whom in the course of centuries it developed into the inexpressibly useful form in which it has been enjoyed by us.

But in ancient times the postal system was intended only for the use of the monarch and those "whom he delighted to honor," and not for his people, who derived no direct benefit from it. It is true that good roads, bridges, ferries, and inns were established; that by guard-houses these routes were kept free from brigands which infested the empire (*Herod. v. 52*); and that travellers might journey upon these highways; but it does not appear that they could obtain the use of the post-horses, even when the government was in no need of them. And above all, the post itself was only for the king. It soon became a law of the system that a courier might impress man or beast into his service, and it was regarded a serious offence to resist such impressment. This privilege of couriers was subsequently, as is well-known, a part of the

Roman system, reference to which is found in the familiar instruction of our Saviour, "Whosoever shall *compel* thee to go a mile, go with him twain" (Matt. v. 41; xxvii. 32; Mark xv. 21). The messages of the king were thus "hastened and pressed on" at any inconvenience to the people; but common men must send their letters by caravans, by special messengers, or in any way they might.

The main post-road in Xerxes' day was that from Susa to Sardis, a distance of about fourteen hundred miles (Herod. *ibid.*). Besides, there was a branch to Ecbatana, and a main line to Babylon, with less important routes to all the localities of the empire.

It may not be amiss to give a brief reference to the postal system of modern Persia. In this there are four routes radiating from Teheran, the capital, as follows: (1) Northwest to Resht on the Caspian, and to Tabriz. (2) Southeast to Yezd. (3) South to Shiraz. (4) West to Hamadan, the supposed site of (southern) Ecbatana, and reputed by the inhabitants to contain the tombs of Esther and Mordecai.

On these routes, at average distances of about fifteen miles, are post-houses, square enclosures of stone or mud, "where several horses are kept stabled, ready to carry at short notice any messenger or traveller to the next post-house" (Ballantine, *Midnight Marches Through Persia*, pp. 118, 119). For one "keran" (some twenty cents) for each "farsakh" (about three miles), any person may travel, "chapar," or post, on these routes. The "farsakh" (parasang?) according to the Zendavesta, is the distance a far-sighted man can distinguish a white camel from a black one. Another and more probable definition is, "as far as a loaded mule can travel in an hour," the common Oriental measure of distance.

The station is called the "menzel" or "chapar-khanneh,"—post-khan or inn, and its keeper the "chapar-chee." Over the door by which the court of the khan is entered is a single small room, forming a second story. This room is the "bala-khanneh,"—the upper inn, and from its name comes our English word *balcony*. Here the traveller may lodge when "chaparing," as such journeying is termed in Anglo-Persian. Of course only saddle-horses can be used; for, says Arnold (*Through Persia by Caravan*, p. 116), "on the most frequented road in the empire no carriage can travel except with a sufficient number of men to lift it over places which are otherwise impassable."

Letters or epistles in the Hebrew Scriptures are designated by several words of which the following is a brief account.

תְּקִבָּה, literally, *a writing*; the ancient and generic word. In the first age there was little distinction between books and letters. The former

were few and brief, of the nature of records, and in nothing but in style and absence of address differed from the latter. The difference never became so great in Old Testament times that any distinguishing word was necessary, though "roll" or sometimes the plural of פָּקֹד would suggest what was longer than a mere letter, which the connection would also sufficiently indicate.

Examples of the use of this word follow. It is to be observed, however, that the dates do not indicate when the word was used, — which would be shown by the time at which each book was written, — but they show when these *letters* were written. The first letter is the earliest mentioned in any human records, except those of Egypt.

David's,	B.C. 1035,	2 Sam. xi. 14, 15.
Jezebel's,	B.C. 899,	1 Kings xxi. 8-11.
King of Syria's,	about B.C. 894,	2 Kings v. 5-7.
Jehu's,	B.C. 884,	Ib. x. 1-7.
King of Babylon's,	B.C. 712,	Ib. xx. 12.
King of Assyria's,	B.C. 710,	Ib. xix. 14; Isa. xxxvii. 14.
Jeremiah's; also Shemaiah's, B.C.	599,	Jer. xxix. 1, 25, 29.

The following derivatives of פָּקֹד, the usual verb *to write*, occur in 2 Chronicles in the sense of *a letter*, — the first being the letter of Hiram, the Phenician king :

פָּקְדָה,	B.C. 1015,	2 Chron. ii. 11.
פָּקְדָה,	B.C. 889,	2 Chron. xxi. 12.
פָּקְדָה,	B.C. 710,	2 Chron. xxxii. 17.

When the Persian influence began to be felt, and especially when the Jews became acquainted with the Persian postal system and adopted it, at least in part, new words for letters and for the different kinds of letters came in. The following are examples of these Hebrew words for "letter," of later times and of Persian origin.

רְאֵשׂ אֶתְּנָא, *a writing carried by a post*. This word occurs in Esther (ix. 26, 29); six times in Nehemiah; twice in 2 Chronicles. In its Chaldee form רְאֵשׂ אֶתְּנָא, it is found three times in Ezra. The word doubtless originated, as Gesenius suggests, from רְאֵשׂ, a *courier*, which is derived by him from רְאִזָּה in its second meaning *to gain*, hence *to hire for wages*. But, as the idea of impressment rather than hiring for wages was prominent in the ancient system, why not derive the word from the first sense of רְאִזָּה, *to gather, to scrape together?* Fuerst, however, with less probability, derives רְאֵשׂ אֶתְּנָא from רְאֵשׂ or רְאַזָּה, *to roll*, hence what is rolled up, a letter or message.

The Greek word ἀγγελέω, *to compel, to press into service* (Matt. v.

41; xxvii. 32; Mark xv. 21, already noticed in this Excursus), and ἄγγελος, *an impressed courier*, seem more naturally to come from נָגֵל, as above, and not from נָגֵל, *a courier* (2 Chron. xxx. 6, etc.), according to Fuerst's opinion.

נְגַפְתָּן, Hebrew and Chaldee, *a letter*, occurs five times in Ezra.

מְגַרְבָּה, Hebrew and Chaldee, is another word, probably of Persian origin, sometimes used in the same sense. Its primitive meaning seems to be a *decree sent by post*, but it also signifies *an answer* or *a letter*. It is found in Esther i. 20, also in Ezra and Daniel.

The materials upon which the ancients wrote, differed somewhat with peoples and ages. While public inscriptions and briefer records were usually placed upon stone or metallic or clay surfaces; for books, clay cylinders, waxed tablets, papyrus rolls, and parchment (or skins) were more often used. (Anc. Mon., Vol. i. pp. 263–268.) The latter was mainly employed in Western Asia for letters and all missive documents. In Persia, Ctesias states that it was the ordinary writing material. (Diod. Sic., ii. 32. § 4.) The root idea of the word נֶגֶד, *a book* or *letter*, seems to be *to scrape* or *shave*, indicating that among the primitive Hebrews also, parchment was the common article thus used.

Paper from the papyrus was employed in Egypt very anciently, but is not likely to have been often transported to such a distance as Persia; and though the plant may have formerly been more abundant in the Jordan valley than now, probably little material was ever manufactured from it to the eastward of that stream. Concerning the making and use of such paper, we may consult Pliny's Natural History (xiii. 22–27). Surfaces for writing were sometimes provided by means of box-wood, palm-leaves, or linen. "Charta bombycina" has been used in Persia for many centuries, but is not known to have been employed under the Achaemenian monarchs.

An alphabet of cursive characters, better adapted to the pen, probably existed in Persia and other countries, in addition to the cuneiform or other alphabet for the chisel. The pen was usually of reed, with a metallic pointed style for wax, and still harder tools for stone or plaster or metal; and the prevalent ink was a mixture of gall and lampblack.

Interesting translations of letters upon papyrus, written in the time of Rameses II., may be found in Brugsch's History of Egypt (London, 1881), Vol. ii. pp. 102–104, 108–114. (See also The True Story of the Exodus, compiled from the work of Henry Brugsch-Bey, by F. H. Underwood, pp. 82, 176–7.)

The following copy of an ancient letter has been furnished by Dr.

Selah Merrill, to whom this Excursus is otherwise indebted. The last sentence of the quotation is worthy of special notice.

"Areus, king of the Lacedemonians, to Onias, sendeth greeting. We have met with a certain writing whereby we have discovered that both the Jews and the Lacedemonians are of one stock, and are derived from the kindred of Abraham. It is but just, therefore, that you, who are our brethren, should send to us about any of your concerns as you please. We will also do the same thing, and esteem your concerns as our own, and will look upon our concerns as in common with yours. Demoteles, who brings you this letter, will bring your answer back to us. This letter is foursquare; and the seal is an eagle, with a dragon in its claws" (Josephus, Ant. xii. 4, 10. Less perfectly, 1 Maccabees xii.).

Letters mentioned in the Old Testament seem to have been commonly in the form of rolls. The modern Persians make up their letters in the same form with a length of six inches, pasting a bit of paper around them, and sealing them with an impression of ink. (Schaff's Bible Dict.; see further upon this subject, Anc. Mon., Vol. ii. p. 370; iii. pp. 157, 266; Smith's Bible Dict., art. Writing *ad fin.*; art. Paper, in Encyclopaedia Britannica, etc.)

EXCURSUS E.

EARLY MODES OF EXECUTION.¹

Our discussion of this subject to meet the demands of the Book of Esther has additional interest from the fact that the argument is applicable to the entire Scriptures of the Old Testament. We find there, it is true, numerous executions of criminals and captives by stoning, by the sword, and with axes, as well as by various barbarous and exceptional methods—by means of saws and harrows of iron, and by passing the victims through the brick-kiln. But these modes of death we do not now propose to consider.

We address ourselves at once to the question, What is meant by those words in the Hebrew Scriptures that are rendered "hang" in our English Bibles? It has been assumed that hanging necessarily means hanging by the neck; and so the Hebrew יָתַן, becomes a gallows; and we are shown the spectacle of Bigthan and Teresh, and Haman and his ten sons hanging by the neck in the most approved style of modern times. Indeed, Jewish tradition has improved upon the simplicity of the original idea in the case of Haman's sons, and reports them as hanging, one corpse below another, in three perpendicular lines.

¹ Esther i. 23; v. 14; vii. 10.

And it is said to be for the purpose of conforming the record to this traditional arrangement that the Jewish copyists have given the names in three perpendicular columns, in the mss.

The reader of the Book of Esther, as given in our authorized translation, would have no doubt that the common method of execution under the reign of Xerxes was by the halter. The reader of Herodotus, on the other hand, especially if he depends on any English translation extant, will infer that the criminal was nailed to a cross, as by the Romans several centuries later. Neither of these impressions is correct. The argument by which this is made apparent will commend itself to the Greek and Hebrew scholar with considerable force. And for this reason we insert a glossary of all the words in these languages that have any special pertinence to the discussion. Our account of the use of these words in Greek authors and in the Bible will be easily understood by all.

Glossary. — *σταυρός*, a stake or pole ; *σταυρώω*, to impale ; *πάσσαλος*, a pin or peg ; *πάσσαλειν*, to pin up or hang on a peg ; *σκόλοψ*, a sharpened pole ; *σκολοπίζω*, to fix on a pole ; *γένει*, a tree, anything of wood, a stake ; *πάσσαλος* = *πάσσαλος*, a pin or peg, a tent-pin ; *τιθῆναι* and *ἀνθῆναι*, to hang by impalement or otherwise ; *ἅρπη* = *ἀνασκολοπίζειν*, to hang upon a stake.¹

Σταυρός. — This is the word commonly rendered *cross*. But any one who will be at the trouble to refer to Liddell and Scott's Lexicon, will find that the *σταυρός* makes its first appearance in Greek literature as a stake split from an oak or other large tree, and driven down to form the support of lake dwellings ; as in Herodotus (v. 16), where we find this use of it repeated in three successive instances ; or as in Homer, Od. xiv. 11, where Eumaeus, the swineherd, is said to have driven them down thick and close to keep in the swine ; or Il. xxiv. 253, where they are driven down to form a palisade around the military hut of Achilles. This is the earliest use of the *σταυρός*. Next we see it in use as a stake for the impaling of criminals.

Σταυρόω. — This is simply the noun *σταυρός* thrown into a verbal form ; just as we make a verb of the noun *pen* when we say, "I penned these lies."

Thus *σταυρόω* from *σταυρός*, a *stake*, means to stake or to drive down stakes in the manner of a palisade. This is its first meaning,—it presents the process. Secondly, it declares the effect as regards the *area*

¹ Gesenius in his Thesaurus defines as follows : *γένει*, arbor, hasta, lignum ; spec. de palo ligneo (Thes. p. 1057). *πάσσαλος*, clavus, paxillus qui parieti infigitur (Thes. p. 643). *ἅρπη*, Hiph. in palo suspendit ; palo affixit (Thes. p. 620).

inclosed,—the visible result of the inclosing process ; or in other words, it means to stake out, or palisade a place. This is called *σταύρωσις*. In a similar way it was used to denote the staking out of a criminal, i.e. impaling him. Herodotus, commonly uses this verb with the preposition ἀνά, up, prefixed ; making it to stake up, or elevate on a stake, by impalement. In the New Testament, on the other hand, where we find forty-seven instances of the use of this verb (*σταυρώω*), the prefixed preposition ἀνά occurs but once (Heb. vi. 6), and then with an entirely different meaning, denoting repetition, instead of elevation. Another marked proof of the change which the intervening centuries had wrought.

The *σταύρωσις* of the Roman practice was the nailing of the living victim prostrate to the cross, the latter not having yet been set up. The *ἀναστάρωσις* of the time of Herodotus was the impalement of the victim (frequently after death by the sword) on an upright stake ; thus giving to the preposition ἀνά, up, its original sense. Three hundred years after the time of Herodotus, when Polybius wrote of the usages he had observed among the Romans, he used this same word (*σταυρός*) to denote their way of putting criminals to death on a cross. It was the best word he could find for such a use.

As the stake was driven into the ground, or when this was impossible, provided with a base or pedestal to keep it upright, so the cross was set in a hole that had been dug in the ground. The resemblance was quite sufficient to warrant the use of the word. There was in either case an upright stake with a human victim fastened upon it. This accounts for the new use of the Greek words *σταυρός* and *σταυρώω* —a use which the New Testament writers and Josephus found already established, and, of course, adopted.

As there are more readers of the Greek Testament than of the Greek of Herodotus, a hundred of the former to one of the latter, there is almost in that proportion an unreadiness to accept the fact that *σταυρός* ever meant anything else than a cross. Hence, a learned writer, with a sublime unconsciousness that he is maltreating the English language, opens the truth to us in the statement that “the first form of the cross was a simple stake.”¹

¹ Zoëckler has fallen into the same infelicity of language in his important work, “The Cross of Christ.” While he recognizes to the full the fact of the ancient impalmements, he speaks of them as crucifixions. He makes a cross of a simple stake, and of almost every sort of thing to which a human victim could be attached, from the *σάρξ* to which Artayktes was pinned, to the rock to which Prometheus was both pinned and chained.

Πάσσαλος. — This is defined in our lexicons as a peg on which to hang clothes, arms, etc. Our only concern with it in this discussion is as the origin of the verb **πασσαλεύω**.

Πασσαλεύω is formed from **πάσσαλος** as **σταυρό** (above) is from **σταυρός**. And it means to peg or to pin, or fasten to anything by pegging or pinning, or to hang up on a peg. Herodotus uses this verb when he tells us of the hanging up of a tripod, won in the Grecian games, on a peg in the house of the victor (i. 144). The meaning is as plain as when Homer hangs up or takes down armor or clothing from a **πάσσαλος**. Herodotus uses it with the prepositions **διά**, *through*, or **πρός**, *to*, prefixed. In the case of the tripod he has it **προσπασσάλευσε τὸν τρίποδα**. He pegged it to his house, i.e. to the wall of his house.

Σκόλωψ. — Anything pointed, say the lexicons; a sharpened pole or stake for fixing heads on, or for impaling. From this is formed the verb **σκολοπίζω**, commonly used by Herodotus with the prefixed preposition **ἀνά**, *up*. He uses it interchangeably with **ἀνασταυρώω**. (vii. 238, and ix. 78.) Enough should be said of these and two or three other specimens to show how the translators of Herodotus have misled us. The first reads **ἐκέλευσε ἀποταμόντας τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀνασταυρώσαι**. The other, **Λεονᾶδε γὰρ ἀποθανόντος ἐν Θερμοπύλεστι Μαρδόνιος τε καὶ Ξέρξες ἀποταμόντες τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀνεσταύρωσαν Μαρδόνιον γὰρ ἀνασκολοπίσας τετιμορήσεαι Λεονᾶδην**.

The first, Rawlinson carelessly renders “Xerxes ordered his head (the head of Leonidas) to be struck off, and the trunk to be fastened to a cross.” The true translation is “he ordered them to cut off his head and fix it upon a pole.” The second is in part a recapitulation of the same incident by one who is urging Pausanias to retaliate by treating the slain Mardonius in the same way. Rawlinson translates it: “When Leonidas was slain at Thermopylae, Xerxes and Mardonius commanded that he should be beheaded and crucified. (Do thou the like by Mardonius and thou wilt have glory in Sparta, and likewise through the whole of Greece.) For by hanging him on a cross thou wilt avenge Leonidas, who was thy father’s brother.” A close and literal translation would render it: “For when Leonidas had fallen at Thermopylae, Mardonius and Xerxes, having cut off his head, fixed it upon a pole. Having done the like to him, etc. For having *thus* impaled Mardonius (i.e. his head), thou wilt avenge Leonidas,” etc.

The second narration of the incident is, of course, to be interpreted by the first. Placed side by side their meaning is clear, and they answer for us the question in what sense does Herodotus use the word.

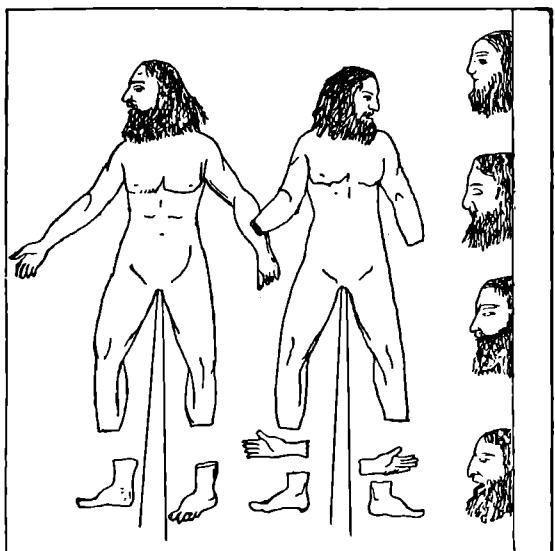
This makes it certain that Astyages impaled the magi (Herod. ii. 128); that the punishment from which the Egyptian physicians sentenced by Darius (iii. 132) were rescued was impalement; and that the doom (iv. 43) conditionally revoked by Xerxes, and afterwards inflicted, was the same.

The case as regards *πασσαλεύω* is equally clear, and yet the translations are equally misleading. Herodotus tells us twice in different books (referring in both instances to the same occurrence) of pegging or pinning a man to a plank. Beloe translates it, “crucified him.” And Rawlinson renders it, “he nailed him to a plank and left him hanging.” There are no nails here. The *ἥλοι* of the Greek authors had no such meaning. This meaning did not make its appearance till the Roman customs required it. The word was not used at first to denote a means of fastening anything. It meant simply a stud, or an ornament on a shield, and became afterwards the name for a nail, from the resemblance which a nail-head bore to it. But the word is not here. We have simply *ζῶντα πρὸς σανδά διεπαστάλευσαν* (vii. 33). *σανδά προσπασσαλεύσαντες ἀνεκρέμασαν* (ix. 120). The first of these should be translated “they pinned him through alive to a plank”; the participle *ζῶντα* showing that it was a case of marked severity and barbarism. The second passage should be translated “having pinned him to a plank they hung him up.”

There are four examples of the use of *πασσαλεύω*, in the Prometheus of Aeschylus, which Burges has strangely rendered *rivet* in every instance. There is a riveting of fetters in immediate connection with it, but it is expressed by other words. Thus, 55, 56, “With this hammer strike (i.e. rivet the fetters) about his hands with strength, and pin (*πασσαλένε*) him to the rock.” 64, 65, “Now drive or pin (*πασσαλένε*), the merciless tooth of an adamantine wedge right (*διαμπάξ*) through his breast.” 113, “In fetters, being pinned” (*πασσαλέντος ὁν*). 19, 20, “I unwillingly shall pin (*προσπασσαλεύσω*) thee, unwilling, in thy brazen fetters to the solitary crag.” So Herodotus, as we have seen, represents the Elaians as pinning Artayktes through to a plank. A hole is of course presupposed in either case, whether bored in the rock or the plank to receive the pin.

The way is now prepared for the following summary: The punishments inflicted by Xerxes succeeded those with which the Assyrians and the Babylonians and the eastern nations generally were familiar. These are exhibited on the marbles and bronzes that have been exhumed from the mounds of Assyria. There has not yet been shown any example of hanging by the neck, or of fastening to a cross. There are abundant

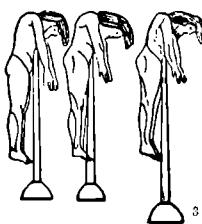
examples of impalement, of which the most ancient, those of the Balowat Gates (850 B.C.), show the impalement to have been *per anum*.¹



2

In connection with these are shown the barbarous amputation of hands and feet, and the impalement of heads. A little later we find numerous impalements from below the breast. One slab shows us three of these, another fourteen. Darius is said to have impaled three thousand of the nobility of Babylon when he took that city.

γενε. A tree. This word has more meanings than our word *tree*. We have our axle-tree, our whiffle-tree, our saddle-tree, our cross-tree, and our boot-tree, as well as our trees of the forest, living and dead. But the Hebrew Scriptures in their



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¹ The stake was in some instances made to traverse the body along the spine, nearly the entire length of the latter. The method of accomplishing this in modern times as practised by the Khan of Khiva, has been to make use of two carriages, binding the victim to the one, and securing the stake to the other, and thus readily applying any amount of force that might be required. In some instances cords were bound around the legs of the victim, and thus he was drawn down upon the stake. Instances of impalement by the Turks in Bosnia, are given on the best authority as late as 1876. — Cross of Christ, by Zöckler, pp. 61, 62.

² From bronzes of the Balowat Gates, copied from facsimile sheets published in London.

³ Copied from Bonomi.

more than three hundred instances of the use of γν, show us more than one hundred examples appropriated to living trees; more than one hundred translated *wood*, equivalent to lumber as we use the word, twenty-five denoting fire-wood or wood for the altar, nineteen translated in the authorized version *timber*, eight translated *sticks*, six translated *staves*, five translated *stocks* or idols of wood, three translated *staff* (or shaft of a spear), one translated *staff* (for walking), one translated *yokes*, two translated *bars*, one translated *boards*, one translated *planks*, one translated *ax-helve*, and sixteen which should be translated *stake* for impalement.

Besides this word γν, and ἡβη, there are no others used in the Book of Esther to express capital punishment. The showing from the language employed by Herodotus, and from the exhumed monuments would settle the case for this book. But as the entire showing for the Old Testament is to the same effect, and comes within a narrow compass, and has never been exhibited in any such connection before, we give exhaustively all that remains.

ῥάπτης. A pin or peg, commonly of wood, nearly equivalent to πάσταλος, though more specifically used to denote the tent-pin; the instrument with which Jael pinned Sisera through the head to the earth (Judges iv. 12). The more general use is indicated in the parable of the vine (Ezek. xv. 213), in the questions, "What is the vine-tree, more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? Or will men take a pin (ῥάπτης) of it to hang (ῥάπτειν inf. of ῥάπτη) any vessel thereon?" Its association in this instance with ῥάπτης, and the prompt resort to it by Jael to pin Sisera to the earth, suggests its use in certain cases where it is not mentioned (e.g. 2 Sam. xxi. 12).

The following are all the cases in which the word appears in the Hebrew Scriptures: (a) Ex. xxvii. 19; (b) xxxv. 18; (c) xxxviii. 20, and 31, twice; (d) xxxix. 40; (e) Num. iii. 37; (f) iv. 42; (g) Deut. xxiii. 13 (14); (h) Judg. iv. 21 (twice) and 22; (i) v. 26; (k) xvi. 14, twice; (l) Ezra ix 8; (m) Isa. xxii. 23, 25; (n) xxxiii. 20; (o) liv. 2; (p) Ezek. xv. 3; (q) Zach. x. 4. Of these, all that precede g are pins connected with the tabernacle furniture; g is a sort of wooden trowel for digging in the earth; h, i, m, o, are tent-pins; l, n, q, and we may add p, are pegs for hanging clothing, etc.

ῥάπτειν. Denotes to hang, without reference to mode, and is the verb most commonly used for hanging by impalement. There are twenty examples of this use, including one of κέρατη; one of hanging by the hair of the head (the case of Absalom), and seven of the hanging up of

things inanimate. One of the earliest examples is that of Pharaoh's chief baker, where hanging by the neck is out of the question, as he was first beheaded.

The examples in which מָתַת is used otherwise than in connection with capital punishment, are Cant. iv. 5; Ezek. xxvii. 10 and 11, where it presents to us the hanging of shields, bucklers, and helmets on the wall; and Ezek. xv. 3 in the question concerning the vine, "Will men take a pin of it to hang anything thereon?" Also in 2 Sam. xviii. 10, where we are told of Absalom hung by the hair of his head in the oak; Lam. v. 12, where princes are said to be hanged up by their hand; and Job xxvi. 7, where it is said he hangeth the earth upon nothing. There are nineteen examples of its use to denote hanging by impalement, of which nine are found in the book of Esther.

To these may be added the single¹ instance of the use of מָתַת in 2 Sam. xxi. 12, obviously cognate to מָתַת, with the same meaning. It should be borne in mind that the suicide of Ahithophel by self-strangulation² is declared by a very different verb, viz. מִתְּנַתָּה, 2 Sam. xvii. 23. And in Nahum ii. 12 (13) the participle (piel) of the latter verb is used where the people of Nineveh are presented under the figure of a raging lion that *strangled* enough for his lionesses.

מָתַת. 1. To be out of joint, dislocated as a limb (Gen. xxxi. 25). (Jacob's thigh.) 2. To be alienated from any one (Hiph). To hang up on a stake, to impale, ἀνασκολοπίζειν, in which punishment the limbs were dislocated or broken, used in Num. xxv. 4 and 2 Sam. xxi. 6, 9, 13. (Gesenius.) The last three instances pertain to the case of Saul's descendants; a judgment executed upon his family to complete the punishment of his wickedness.

Of Saul it is distinctly declared (1 Sam. xxxi. 9) that he was beheaded. The same was probably true of the others who were impaled with him; *fastened* (verses 10 and 12) *to the wall of Bethshan*. This fastening is described (2 Sam. xxi. 12) as a hanging; where מָתַת is used. Doubtless this was a case for the Τόξον, equivalent to πάσσαλος. They pinned him to the wall.

Thus we see that the word rendered tree, stands for almost anything that is made of wood, and is the word that would naturally be used, as it is, to denote a stake for impalement. The word rendered pin, or peg, like the Greek πάσσαλος, is used for a certain class of executions

¹ The participle (*paul*) of this word is used Deut. xxviii. 66, and Hosca xi. 7. But these examples are not pertinent to the discussion.

² It is remarkable that in the case of Judas also, a word (ἀπήγαπε) denoting self-strangulation, rather than the usual word for hanging, is used.

or post mortem exposures. And the three words rendered “hang” (saying nothing of that employed with reference to self-strangulation, but never used in respect to public execution) are applied in cases where decapitation had taken place, and where other circumstances show that impalement, and not hanging by the neck, must have been intended. If we would read the Old Testament aright, we must understand every case of hanging on a tree, except that of Absalom (caught by his hair) as denoting impalement on a stake, instead of suspension by a halter.

EXCURSUS F.

THE JEWS IN EXILE.¹

IT is proposed in this Excursus to give some proximate idea, from the data we have, of the condition of the Jewish exiles in the time of Xerxes. The participle which Haman applies to them, **נָפְלָא**, rendered in the Septuagint *διεσπαρμένον*, from the same root as the familiar *διασπορά* used in the Apocrypha and the New Testament, shows the tendency to become cosmopolitan already manifesting itself among that wonderful people. Haman says they were dispersed among all the provinces of the empire. This dispersion must have been in a great part voluntary, as they had passed out of the condition of bondmen to be bought and sold. They had the same liberty, both civil and religious, as the other nationalities of the empire. The predicted misery² of their doom of expatriation had been hard to bear while the power of Babylon remained unbroken, but almost immediately afterward their status was essentially changed. The conquerors were naturally their deliverers and friends. Wherever the Medes and Persians found disaffection or hatred of the Babylonish power there they found their allies and helpers, and were predisposed to favor them. The Jewish people have always shown a marked ability to make the best of the most adverse circumstances, and still more to turn to account every change that has been made in their favor.

When Cyrus issues his decree giving them permission to return to the land of their fathers, these sons of the captives do not present the appearance of bondmen just escaping from their chains. They are men capable of patriotism, and of every high and noble feeling. They have prospered even in their captive state, and much more in the circumstances of their emergence from it. It is a delightful picture that is sketched by the prophet Isaiah,³ where he presents the daughter of Zion as lifting up her eyes like one awaking from a dream, and saying

¹ Esther iii. 8.

² Deut. xxviii. 66, 67.

³ Isa. xl ix. 21.

in her heart, "Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children and am desolate; a captive and removing to and fro; and who hath brought up these? Behold I was left alone; these, where had they been?" It was the first generation of the captives,—those who felt the strong tie of home and native land from which they had been torn away,—that "hanged their harps on the willows by the rivers of Babylon, and wept as they remembered Zion." Their children knew no other home but the land in which they were born, except as the religious instruction, and the history with which they were made familiar, and nursery hymns, brought the past and the distant to their minds. With many in the second and third generation even this impression was deep and strong enough to create a yearning for the holy land and the temple-service. As a religious feeling it never died out till the temple was finally destroyed by the Romans. As a sentiment it is living still, as is attested by the wailing-place of the Jews which is kept in weekly remembrance. When the strength of this feeling was put to the test by the several appeals that were made in the times of Zerubbabel and Ezra there were many thousands to respond, and their caravans were as armies of the ransomed of the Lord. But there was a larger number whose engagements and interests had already become a tie of sufficient strength to hold them to a permanent home in other lands.¹ It has been estimated that those who returned to Palestine in connection with the three above-mentioned rallies were to those who preferred to remain in their scattered and distant homes about in the proportion of one to six.

When we come to inquire into the condition of this larger portion outside of Palestine as regards their outward prosperity, and their intellectual, moral, and spiritual state, there are some points that may be easily established. We should infer from the whole subsequent history of the Hebrew nation that they were prompt to discover every opportunity to rise above poverty and want, and to find in every employment that was open to them an avenue to sure and steady gain. It has been the story of Jacob and Laban, over and over again, through all the ages, and all over the world. What we might regard as thus inferentially certain in the time of Xerxes is very clearly shown by the

¹ Ewald says, "Very many of the sons of Israel, especially of the second generation, without wavering in their fidelity to the commands of Jahveh, had allied themselves with the new fatherland upon which they had been cast in Chaldea, and elsewhere, so that they did not avail themselves of the permission which was given them to return. Great numbers of individuals also, in smaller or larger groups, had already been thrown among the heathen before the great dispersion and the destruction of Jerusalem." — *History of Israel*, Vol. iv. pp. 93, 34.

stipulation of Haman, in which he engaged to pay into the king's treasury a large sum of money to be derived from the confiscated estates of the Jews. Doubtless he understood the case well enough to be sure that he could pay the ten thousand talents, and yet be a large gainer by the transaction. The same thing could be shown from the testimony of the post-exilic prophets, and their numerous complaints of the tendency on the part of their brethren to overdo in their zeal for commercial thrift. As it was with the returned exiles, so it was with those who did not return. In this matter of unfailing industry and shrewd bargaining the Jews of that day are proved to have been true to the national instinct and history, and their condition, of course, became, as Haman saw it, one of growing prosperity.

We are impressed with the obvious fact of their ready absorption as a part of the acknowledged population of the land. They seem to have been brought upon a common level with the other nationalities of that highly composite empire. There is no hint of a disposition to raise any question in regard to this in any quarter; until it was raised by the malicious and vengeful spirit of Haman. But we are not to think of them as the less a distinct people; they kept themselves as separate from the Gentile world as at any period of their history. The more they felt the loss of the peculiar privileges of their native land, the more they clung to such as remained. Our knowledge of their history subsequent to the times of Esther and Mordecai throws back a strong light upon those earlier times. The writings of Daniel, the hints that are scattered through the post-exilic prophets and psalms, the apocryphal books, those of the Alexandrine Jews, and the later Rabbis and Josephus, the New Testament, the early Christian fathers, and the allusions that have been traced in the Greek and Roman classics, all yield a testimony more or less distinct in regard to the condition of the Jews in the first half of the fifth century before Christ. We certainly know that they brought their sacred books previously written safely through that stormy period, that they kept alive the venerated traditions pertaining to the beginnings of their national life and their ancestral glory, and that they cherished the steadfast hope that God would redeem his people.

This opens to us a glimpse of what the *diaspora* were doing at this very time for themselves and for the world.¹ It would be a great mis-

¹ We may here quote the profound remark of Ewald (Vol. iv. p. 28). "In so far as we may still speak of a people of Israel, this expression must now be taken in the sense which it ought really to have had from the beginning, but to which it has never yet corresponded, viz. that of the messenger of the true God

take to suppose that they were so absorbed in the strife for worldly gain that nothing more or better could be said of them. The stock that could yield such men as Daniel and his three companions, and Zerubbabel and Haggai, and Nehemiah and Ezra, and the faithful men who labored with them, did not fail to produce thousands of inferior lights,—less luminous, but not less true,—and their influence reached and modified the current of religious thought around them. At first, as was natural, we find them bowed down under the sense of their own calamities, and dwelling in bitterness upon the wrongs which they had suffered at the hands of their oppressors. “O daughter of Babylon,” they sang, “happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.”¹ Indeed, we may trace something like a progression in their psalms of the period of the exile from the simple consciousness of wrong and outrage and the yearning for justice, as in Ps. lxxix, to the longing for deliverance, as in Ps. lxxx., and to the testimony of praise as a means of enlightening the heathen among whom their lot was cast, as we see in Ps. xcvi.: “Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people; for Jehovah is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are nothings;² but Jehovah made the heavens. O worship Jehovah in the beauty of holiness; fear before him all the earth; say among the heathen, Jehovah reigneth.” The people who could utter such a testimony for Jehovah in their very songs among the heathen must have exerted an important influence upon them. Much has been said of the waning of idolatry in the Gentile world in the centuries immediately preceding the Christian era; but it has not been common to ascribe this with sufficient distinctness to the direct and indirect testimony of the chosen people of God.

This brings us to another fact of great importance pertaining to the period of the exile,—the change which it wrought upon the Jews themselves. Every reader of the Old Testament must have been deeply impressed with the constant disposition on the part of the Hebrew people from the days of the Egyptian bondage to drift into the idolatry which prevailed around them. It required the stern prohibitions of the decalogue, and the constant admonitions of the prophets, and the frequent judgments of God to restrain them, and even these were insufficient. But now came the final and efficacious remedy. It was one of the

to the heathen, and his instrument for leading them to himself. This alone must henceforth be held fast as its highest mission; and only in this new and glorified life can it retain any true life at all.”

¹ Ps. cxxxvii. 8.

² אֱלֹהִים

marked results of their captive state. This old tendency to idolatry was overcome and brought to an end. The prophets complain of it no more. The sins which they are called to rebuke are of quite another type.

The subject race did not take warmly to the religion of their conquerors. As they saw it in its naked deformity, with no intermixture of their own traditional feasts and historic associations, it became repulsive to them, and only rendered the desolateness and homesickness in which they pined the more intense. And when they passed from the Babylonian to the Persian control they found themselves almost as remote from idolatrous practices as in the best days of David and Solomon. The followers of Zoroaster, whatever else they may have been, were not in the ordinary sense idolaters. If Cyrus, in spite of his early training yielded to some of the idolatrous usages of Mesopotamia, it was only the compliance of a politic ruler, and not the impulse of conscience or the zeal of conviction. We see what the inherited sentiment of the Persians was in the iconoclastic fury of Cambyses.¹ What was begun in the disgust of the Jews at the idolatry of Babylon was completed in the sympathy which they found among a people whose monotheism was older than the days of Abraham. We may well pause and admire that Providence that had preserved through all these centuries, far away from Palestine, beyond the land of Shinar, in the heart of Asia, this simple faith in the one living and true God. Egypt with all its splendors of art and power, the Phoenicians with their extended commerce, Assyria with its far-reaching prowess and control, and all the cities of Mesopotamia under the Babylonian power, had fallen into the grossest and most revolting polytheism. The Hebrews before the exile were only the too apt pupils of their idolatrous neighbors. It was the constant and too often unsuccessful labor of the prophets to hold them back, or to recover them from this apostasy from the God of their fathers. But here, so far away in the bosom of the continent, dwelt a people that without the advantages of the Hebrews, without their oracles or their prophets, clung with persistence to the one central truth which the latter were so willing to cast away. And now when the final cure of the evil was to be wrought out for the Jews in their exile, they find themselves in contact with a people who have for ages — indeed, we may say from the first — given little or no countenance to idolatry. This must have been an important factor in the remedy which divine providence had prepared for the healing of that old spiritual disease of the chosen people.

It is natural that the inquiry should be raised, what, if anything, was

¹ See Herod. iii. 29 and 38.

gained to the Hebrew mind, in respect to knowledge, clearness of understanding, penetration of divine themes, and mental furniture in the widest sense, by this more intimate contact with the Gentile world? In this inquiry we may include both their contact with the Zoroastrians and magi of the east, and afterward with the Greek philosophers of the west. We are at no loss to discover a growing care for their own sacred writings and a deeper reverence for the truth. As the superstitions of the other nations lost power over their minds they were drawn to deeper meditation upon the neglected treasures of heavenly wisdom that were stored up for them in the books of Moses and the prophets. The powers of good and evil became more sharply defined, and acquired a new vividness and reality. Possibly something was contributed from the Oriental exaggerations of the influence and power of the spirit that worked for evil, so that the personality and work of Satan entered more distinctly into their faith. They studied the revelations of the prophets, and caught the foregleams of the future which they contain, and especially of the promised Messiah. If there were in Mesopotamia and Persia remains of the old Eden prophecy, and of oracles now lost that were kindred to those that Balaam was inspired to utter, these might have reacted upon the Hebrew thought; while this in turn created a deep and widespread undercurrent of expectation, such as disclosed itself in the journey of the magi at the time of the Saviour's birth.

Authors from the time of the Christian fathers, and even that of the classic heathen writers, to our own day, have too easily contented themselves with noting the fact of the decay of heathenism. They point out the growing scepticism and want of confidence in the deities whose temples rose in every city, and whose myths filled so much of the early literature; but they make too little of this one potent cause. Here was a widespread, almost world-wide, testimony against the polytheism of the world. It was more. It was the exhibition of a grander faith. It put multitudes upon questioning that which they had never questioned before, and upon doubting that which they had never doubted before. It was the solvent that entered quietly into the old systems, and weakened their coherence. It was the leaven that gradually changed the popular thought.

The Loss of the Temple. — Among the changes to which we see the Jewish people endeavoring to accommodate themselves was the loss of their temple. What was to become of their central national service,—those daily offerings in which they had seemed to be serving Gqd in a national sense? Every Jew felt that it was a service of the whole peo-

ple, and that he had a part in it. But now that their temple was gone, and the holy city in ruins, it seemed that an essential part of their ritual and of their national life had been stricken out. They felt themselves cut off from setting up another Jerusalem, and building another temple in the land of strangers, even if their captive condition had left this in their power.

It was but once, so far as we can gather from history, that they undertook this,¹ and then it proved a failure. The most that the devout Jew could do was to imagine a temple where the temple once stood, or to think of its ruins as a remnant of the temple, — a rudimentary remnant, from which it was one day to spring into being again, — and turn his face with Daniel toward the poor remains. It was something gone; something stricken out of their divinely appointed round of service; and a prop on which their spirits had leaned in exile taken away. They must live in the faith which the prophecies of a restoration inspired. This state of things continued till the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel.

The Synagogue System.—One of the products of the period of exile, was the synagogue worship. Some germs of this we discover at an earlier day. The men who were trained in the schools of the prophets must have had some way of communicating with the people. The cultivation which they received suggests regular and systematic work. Some of the movements of Elisha suggest a periodical service held among the people. It would be a very natural device to resist the spread of the Baal worship and the tendency to religious declension. It would be all the easier for the exiles to make the synagogue a rallying-point and a means of edification if they had made trial of it before.

In some way they had learned and could sing the songs of Zion. They had their harps to accompany the song. If they refused to sing these songs for the amusement of the heathen, it does not follow that they never used them in worship. We should infer, on the contrary, that it was from some such use that the heathen learned that they had them. There was some way and some place for gathering the Jews together in Shushan for religious purposes, as Esther very well knew, and as

¹ From several curious statements in Josephus (see *Ant.* B. 13, chap. 3, sec. 2 and 3; *Wars*, B. 1, chap. 1, sec. 1, and *Wars*, B. 7, chap. 10, sec. 3), it appears that Onias, the son of Onias III., and legitimate heir of the high-priesthood, having been excluded from that dignity, took refuge in Egypt. Coming into favor there with Ptolemy Philometor and Cleopatra, he obtained permission to build in Leontopolis, in the name of Heliopolis, a temple similar to that at Jerusalem. Onias availed himself of this permission, and built the temple and became its priest; and the Mosaic ritual was celebrated there in the Greek language for many years.

Mordecai proved when, in compliance with her wish, he assembled them for fasting and prayer. In the time of Malachi, under the admonitions of the prophet, we are told “they that feared the Lord spake often one to another”; and this was specially commended, and became a means of discerning between the righteous and the wicked; between them that served God, and them that served him not. This strongly suggests the synagogue assembly.

The 74th Psalm, which it would seem must have been written soon after the wasting of Judea by the Chaldeans,—complains that “they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.” The objection that has been made to this translation begs the question. The obvious sense of the original assumes that there were structures, not in one place, but in many places, where assemblies were held; and that these were structures that could be burned.¹ We need not insist that they had attained to the full character of synagogues in the later sense of that word. But we see here the beginning,—the upspringing of the synagogue system. It would take time to get it firmly rooted and established. But these pre-Messianic centuries were the period in which it was especially needed; and these were the centuries in which it was done. The day came in which there were, according to Josephus, four hundred synagogues in Jerusalem. The existence of seven synagogues in Rome has been definitely established, and probably there were others. Indeed, it may be laid down as the almost universal fact, that there were synagogues wherever there were Jews.² Each of these was a centre not only of common religious interests, but of much beside. They were intimately connected with each other and with their common centre, Jerusalem. Every Jew, however far away, regarded himself as a member of the chosen people, and endeavored to keep the bond of union fresh and strong. He paid yearly his temple-tax, sent

¹ Compare all the renderings of מִשְׁפָר in the Old Test., viz. “times,” “seasons,” “set times,” “appointed times,” “feasts,” “assembly,” “congregation,” “place of assembly,” “solemn feast,” “solemnities,” “solemn day,” etc., some two hundred examples in all; only one of them represents anything that could be burned. It is only what we should expect, that when we find the word requiring to be translated “congregation, or assembly,” in more than one hundred instances, it should sometimes be put for the place or building in which the assembly is accustomed to be gathered; the container being put for the thing contained, precisely as we use the word *church* in common speech for that which contains a *church*. The expression “all the synagogues of God in the land,” כל מִשְׁפָר אֱלֹהֶיךָ must be severely wrested to be made to signify simply the temple at Jerusalem.

² The prosuechae, or “praying places,” near the shore of the sea or some river’s side were rudimentary anticipations of synagogues to be built whenever the resident Jews should be of sufficient number to undertake it. See Greek of Acts xvi. 13.

offerings and gifts to Jerusalem, and once, at least, in his life went up to visit the holy city and to keep the feast. The Supreme Council in Jerusalem sent annually the calendar of festivals to the congregations of the dispersion, communicated to them important decisions, and took care that they received information of all events which concerned the Jewish people.

The Great Synagogue.—Correlated to the synagogue system, was what was called the Great Synagogue; a body of men at Jerusalem to whom the Jewish writers ascribe an important part in the editing of the sacred books, and in forming and guarding the institutions and traditions of their nation. They tell us that it began in the time of Ezra. Doubtless, its rudiments appeared about that time, as it is very certain that the work which he undertook is afterwards found to be in their hands for its further accomplishment. The following are some of the things which we find ascribed to them: “The gathering and sifting of the sacred books, so far as they had been rescued from the great catastrophe of the exile; their threefold division; the introduction of a new alphabet, as well as of vowel-signs and accents; the separation of the Pentateuch into sections; the establishment of an order of worship for the synagogues; the adoption of various liturgical forms, particularly the eighteen so-called benedictions; stricter rules for the observance of the Sabbath and other festival days; the change by which the year that had begun with Nisan was made to begin with Tisri; the abolition of slavery for native-born Israelites; the more rigorous observance of the Sabbatic year; sharper and more extended regulations in regard to things clean and unclean; and a new exaltation of the virtue of alms-giving.”¹

Change of Language.—We come next to a change which, though not strictly religious, had an important bearing upon the oracles of religion, and the clearer conceptions of mankind on this great subject: the change that passed upon language. This, as regards the matter in hand, was twofold. The Hebrew was becoming a dead language, and a modified Chaldaic, written in the same characters, was taking its place. Still, the written Hebrew Scriptures continued to hold their place, as they do in the synagogues to this day; a marvellous illustration of the profound remark of Dr. Peabody, that a dead language, if used in any way, cannot be, like those of modern times, a constantly dying language; but is all the more a living language, because it is dead. Or to strip the representation of its paradoxical form, a dead language is not subject to change. It locks up its treasures and holds them. You may question it in any century, the first or the nine-

¹ Condensed from Bissell on the Apocrypha, pp. 10, 11.

teenth, and it gives the same answer. This is what the Hebrew has done. Meanwhile, like the Latin, it has been kept in constant use. And the Jews have now their weekly papers published in the Hebrew language for the use of the learned Rabbis, and such other of the Jewish people as have kept up their knowledge of the ancient tongue.

When the Syro-Chaldaic — which differs about as much from the Hebrew as the modern Greek does from the ancient — became the language of the Jews of Mesopotamia and of Palestine their learned men began to write their Targums, or paraphrases of the text of the Old Testament, giving us what may almost be called a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into another language. The Jewish historians connect this with the early practice — of which some trace appears in the Book of Ezra — of appointing men to explain the sacred text as it was read in public, verse by verse. That which was thus delivered was not at first allowed to be written, and was never allowed to be read from a manuscript, for fear the people might confound it with the sacred text. Thus the reading of the text was by one man; the explanation by another. This explanation, as the language changed, approximated to the idea of a translation, but was more diffuse. There can be but little doubt that the “meturgeman,”¹ as this official was called, derived his material from some other meturgeman, and he from another; and all mainly from some respectable and competent original source; for the meturgeman was not held in very high respect, and this for no other reason than that it was found necessary to make him a small compensation; and “no sign of blessing,” it was said, “could rest upon the profit made by their calling, since it was money earned on the Sabbath.” If these men stumbled, or missed the mark, they were liable to be stopped and silenced in the most ignominious and public manner. This shows that the more intelligent of the people became pretty familiar with their deliverances, and that they were very much alike. The time came that their learned Rabbis felt it to be important to commit their utterances to writing. And this writing bears the name of *Targum*, from same root as *meturgeman*. This is the centre or core of a vast body of Jewish literature, known as the Midrash — *expounding*; which again is divided into the Halachah — *the rule to go by*, and the Haggadah — *the poetry of Jewish thought*; “flashes of fancy, darting up from the divine word.” The Targums have been of great service in translating and interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures into other languages, besides the valuable use which they subserved for the Jewish people when they were a part of their vital and working machinery.

¹ מְטוּרֵגָמָן Ezra iv. 7.

EXCURSUS G.

SIGNET-RINGS AND SEALS.¹

THE use of "seals" in some form dates back to remote antiquity, and has been very general, especially among Oriental nations. We propose to set forth succinctly certain facts, gleaned from various sources, respecting this use. Obviously, among semi-civilized and barbarous peoples a knowledge of chirography is not likely to be generally diffused. The man who is called upon to affix his signature to some document is in many cases unable to write his name. Hence, he is under the necessity of making his "mark," or of employing some equivalent device. Very generally the seal has served the purpose of signature. What a recent authority says of modern Oriental usage is equally true of the ancient: "The signature of a letter or document is not written, but stamped with a seal" (Van Lennep, *Bible Lands*, p. 392). So important is the seal that never, except under extraordinary circumstances, does its owner part with it; carrying it constantly in his bosom, fastened by a string around his neck or attached to his clothing. In other cases it is worn, in the form of a signet-ring, upon his finger.

In former times seals were used to make impressions in wax or in clay, which subsequently hardened, but more recently the seal is used with ink, in much the same way as type. Many of the clay disks which had been stamped as above, and afterwards burned, are to be found among the ruins of ancient cities, and most of them well preserved. They were evidently fastened to the original document by means of a string, which has long since — with the document itself — turned to dust.

Besides its use for forming signatures, the seal was employed for protecting that which was designed to remain closed. The mouth of the lions' den into which Daniel had been cast, and the tomb which held our Saviour's body, were each secured by the seal of the ruler against being opened by unauthorized hands. The ancient Egyptians are said to have sealed the doors of the tombs of their ancestors, whose remains they guarded with care and veneration. In these cases a lump of clay was carefully affixed to the door and stamped with the seal; this hardening, the door could not be opened without destroying the seal-mark, and thus revealing the sacrilege.

The form of the seal itself was various. In Knight's Pictorial Bible, on Gen. xli. 42, may be seen neat representations of ancient seals

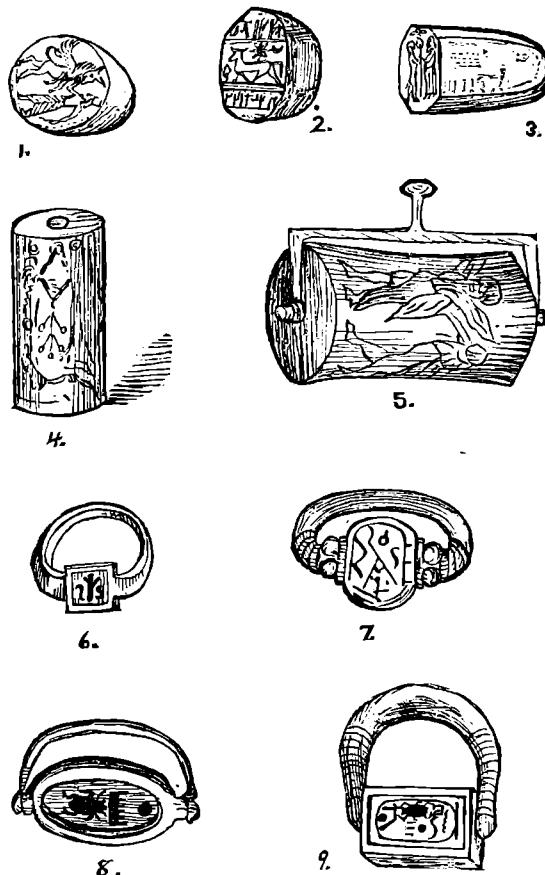
¹ Esther iii. 10, 12; viii. 2, 8, 10.

or signets. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Vol. xiii. pp. 676, 677) gives a fine engraving representing a signet-ring which has a square revolving bezel, on which are four serpents interlaced. Among the forms most in use before the adoption of the ring-seal were cylinders, squares, and pyramids. The cylinders were of various sizes. Layard describes them as varying in size from about two inches to a quarter of an inch long, and as being quite circular, or barrel-shaped, or slightly concave. These cylinder-seals were pierced longitudinally, and often made to revolve upon a metal axis attached to a handle, much like a common stone roller for levelling the walks in a garden. (*Nineveh and Babylon*, pp. 602–609, Putnam's edition.) The seal was rolled over the moist clay or other material, leaving a distinct and well-defined impress. Mr. Loftus (*Chaldea and Susiana*, p. 254) observes, “The Chaldeans were not contented with a simple impression, but rolled the cylinder over the entire written document, thus preventing all chance or possibility of forgery.” Sometimes the cylinder-seal was suspended by a string passing through it, and tied about the owner's neck, who carried the seal in his bosom.

Layard mentions some fourteen different kinds of stone of which these cylinders were made (*Nineveh and Babylon*, *loc. cit.*). Rawlinson says they were made of serpentine, meteoric stone, jasper, chalcedony, or other similar substance. They are round, or nearly so, and measure from half an inch to three inches in length; ordinarily the diameter is about one third of the length. A hole is bored through the stone from end to end, so that it could be worn upon a string; some of the earliest were fastened about the wrist in this manner. Rawlinson gives an engraving of a cylinder seal of this character. (*Anc. Mon.*, Vol. i. p. 93, Dodd, Mead, and Co.'s edition.) The square and pyramidal seals seem to have been applied by hand, as occasion required.

The ring-seal probably came into use latest of all. It consisted of a ring, to one side of which a seal was attached,—the seal being sometimes stationary with the inscription upon the outer side only; at other times it was so constructed as to revolve upon its axis, and possessed several inscriptions, which might be used at the option of the wearer. Sometimes the seal was a flat oval disk having inscriptions upon the two opposite surfaces, at other times it was in the form of a cube with inscriptions upon the four sides.

We give, on the following page, cuts representing the different seals and signet-rings already described. We have gathered them from various sources, and trust that they will assist the reader in gaining clear ideas of the subject. The authors to whom we are chiefly indebted are named above.



SIGNET-RINGS AND SEALS.

1. Disk seal of chalcedony, with Persian inscription.
2. Disk seal of chalcedony, with Phoenician inscription.
3. Conical seal of sapphire chalcedony, with Assyrian inscription.
4. Cylinder signet, through which a string was passed, and fastened around the wrist or neck.
5. Roller signet, with handle of metal.
- 6 and 7. Signet rings, with fixed bezels.
- 8 and 9. Signet-rings, with revolving bezels. No. 9 is the famous signet-ring of Horus, described by Wilkinson (see p. 145 *infra*), and containing £20 worth of gold.

In sketching concisely the use of the seal among ancient nations, we shall follow a geographical rather than a chronological order.

Among the Romans there was a simple custom of antiquity, derived from the Etruscans, of wearing an iron signet-ring upon the right hand. Even after the introduction of gold rings, old families continued to wear the primitive iron signet-ring (Guhl and Koner, Life of the Greeks and Romans, p. 497).

The Romans, following the Egyptians, engraved first, animals, then the portraits of heroes and princes; later, frequently, indelicate figures and symbols. Roman rings were often of immense value; that of the empress Faustina is said to have cost \$200,000, that of Domitia \$300,000. Among both the Greeks and the Romans, the seal was usually set in a ring, whence *annulus* came to be a Latin name for seal (Am. Cyclop., Vol. xiv. pp. 336, 337, 735.) The ring of a Roman emperor was a kind of state seal; and the emperor sometimes allowed the use of it to such persons as he wished to be regarded as his representatives (Dion Cassius, lxvi. 2). The keeping of the seal-ring (*cura annuli*) was entrusted to a special officer (Smith, Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, art. Annulus). The Romans seem to have worn one signet-ring at least; and, judging from the statues, generally on the fourth finger. At the beginning these rings were of iron, and the golden ones were among the distinctions of the higher classes. Later, vain persons, in order to display their wealth, covered their hands with rings. (Becker's Gallus, p. 429, note.) It was the custom to breathe on the seal before using it, in order to prevent the adhering of the wax. (Gallus, p. 38.) The pope's "bull" derives its name from the Latin word *bulla*—primarily a round object, a bubble, a boss or stud, an ornament worn upon the neck; hence, later, a seal. The seal of a papal bull is of lead or gold, stamped on one side with the effigies of St. Peter and St. Paul, and on the other with the name of the reigning pope. It is attached to the document by strings. ("Bullae dicuntur a sigillo vel plumbeo vel aureo, exhibente hinc SS. Apostolorum Petri et Pauli imagines, illinc vero nomen Pontificis, quod inhaeret funiculo serico vel cannabis." J. P. Gury, Compendium Theologiae Moralis, Vol. i. p. 114. Romae, MDCCCLXXXII.).

There can be little doubt that the use of the ring and the custom of sealing was introduced from the East—where it was common—by the way of Greece, into Rome. In the time of Solon every Grecian freeman wore a signet-ring of gold, silver, or bronze, and the right was enjoyed by all classes of the Athenians. This legislator made a law against the forgery of seals. Important documents, although intended

to be sealed up, were yet attested by a seal beneath the writing (Becker, Charicles, 159, Note 6). The free Greek, if not of the lowest class, wore a ring, not only as an ornament, but as a signet to attest his signature, or for making secure his property. No trace of this usage is found in Homer (Becker, pp. 198–200, Note 6). According to Pliny, Alexander the Great sealed all important documents in Europe with his own ring; in Asia with that of Darius. When he gave his ring to Perdiccas, he was understood to nominate him as his successor (McClin-tock and Strong's Cyclopaedia, Vol. ix. p. 31).

In ancient Egypt signet-rings and rings for ornament were worn by all classes. They were of gold, silver, or bronze; those of the latter metal were generally signet-rings. The lower classes generally wore ivory or blue porcelain. The rich had plain circlets of gold, bearing either a scarabaeus, or a stone engraved with the name of some deity or king, or with a sacred emblem and legend. The Egyptians wore the signet-ring on the fourth finger of the left hand (American Cyclop., Vol. xiv. pp. 336, 337). In that elegant and elaborate work, A History of Ancient Art in Egypt, by Perrot and Chipiez, Vol. ii. p. 387, are to be seen two unmistakable engravings of signet-rings — one of them a curious double one — copied from the originals in the Louvre. One signet-cylinder in the Alnwick Museum bears the date of Osirtasen I., between 2000 and 3000 b.c. The seal of Sabacho, king of Egypt (b.c. 711) has been found; also the supposed seal of Sennacherib (Layard, Nineveh and Babylon, pp. 154–160). Among the Egyptian antiquities in Dr. Abbott's collection, formerly at Cairo, but since removed to New York, is a very remarkable ring which was doubtless the seal of Cheops, or Suphis, the builder of the Great Pyramid. It is of fine gold, and weighs nearly three sovereigns. It was found in a tomb at Ghizeh, and is in excellent preservation. The details are minutely accurate and beautifully executed. The hieroglyphics within its oval make the name of that Pharaoh whose tomb was the pyramid. So there can be no reasonable doubt as to the identity of this ring (Smith's Bible Dict., art. Seal; Ebers, Egyptian Princess, Vol. i. p. 291, and note). Many of the rings discovered in Egypt are believed to be more than four thousand years old. Wilkinson gives a series of drawings of such rings (Ancient Egyptians, Vol. iii. p. 374; see also Lepsius, Denkmäler, x. pl. 42). In 1824, in a tomb near Memphis, was found what is thought to be the signet given by Pharaoh to Joseph. This seal has two tablets, turning upon a swivel, and, with the ring, is massive and of very pure gold. The carving is bold, sharp, and very excellent. The seal has the cartouch of Pharaoh; and one line of the

engraving has been translated "Paaneah," part of the name—or according to Brugsch, title—given by the king to Joseph. Gen. xli. 45 (Edwards, History and Poetry of Finger-Rings, pp. 153, 154).

In Gosse's Monuments of Ancient Egypt (pp. 201, 202), we find an engraving and description of a signet-ring of great beauty and value. Sir Gardner Wilkinson estimates that it contains gold to the value of twenty pounds sterling. It consists of a massive ring of gold, bearing an oblong, square plinth of the same metal, an inch in length, and more than half an inch in its greatest width. The seal evidently turns on its axis. One side bears the hieroglyphic name of Horus, with reference to the time of Amunoph III., B.C. 1400; the three others contain respectively a crocodile, a scorpion, and a lion with the legend "Lord of strength." This signet-ring on account of its value, its style of engraving, and its use as a seal, happily illustrates such passages of Scripture as Gen. xli. 42; Ex. xxviii. 11, 21, 36; 1 Kings xxi. 8; Jer. xxii. 24; Haggai ii. 23. Among the Hebrews the ring seems to have been almost indispensable as an article of dress. It was probably handed down from father to son as a mark of rank and authority. The Jews wore the signet-ring on the right hand, on the middle or little finger.

Sometimes, in imitation of the Babylonians, they wore a simple seal or signet (**םְנִיטָה**) which was suspended from the neck, over the breast (Gen. xxxviii. 18; Cant. viii. 6; Haggai ii. 23). Sometimes merely the owner's name, at other times an additional sentence was engraved upon the seal. A monarch—as we learn from numerous passages of Scripture—by entrusting his seal to a favorite conferred upon him high power and dignity, in fact made him the representative of himself (Gen. xli. 42). Seal-rings were named **מִסְכָּנָה** from a verb which signifies to impress into any soft substance, as clay; hence, to seal. The engraving of a signet-ring was often executed in the most skilful manner (Ex. xxviii. 21, 36; xxxix. 6, 14, 30).

Herodotus, speaking of the Babylonians, says that every man has a seal and a staff curiously wrought (i. 195). And Mr. Layard informs us that the gems and cylinders often found among the ruins evince that the Assyrians were very skilful in engraving on stone. Many of their seals are most delicately and minutely ornamented with various sacred devices, and with the forms of animals (Nineveh and Remains, Vol. ii. p. 320). So Mr. Loftus, describing the baked clay tablets, found by him at Warka, the ancient Erech, and the impressions which they present, says that "many are very beautiful, and shew the perfection attained in the art of gem engraving in Babylonia at that early period" (Chaldea and Susiana, p. 229). The men in Chaldea generally carried

an engraved cylinder in agate or other hard stone, which was used as a seal or signet, and was probably worn around the wrist. At all events the signet-cylinder always occupies this position in the tombs. Sometimes we find signet-seals of a disk-like form, with inscriptions on the two sides, and a protuberance at one edge, to which probably a string was attached for convenience in transportation. The signet-cylinder of Darius Hystaspis is still extant, bearing a trilingual inscription, "Darius, the Great King," and representing that monarch as engaged in a lion-hunt in a palm-grove (Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, Vol. i. pp. 106, 107; Vol. iii. pp. 226, 342). The intention of king Xerxes in committing his signet-ring first to Haman, and afterwards to Mordecai, is sufficiently obvious. Each in succession became the prime minister of the empire, clothed with authority second only to that of the king himself, and having power to issue edicts and decrees in the king's name, and to affix thereto the royal seal.

EXCURSUS H. THE MASSACRE.¹

SOME have objected to the credibility of the narrative, on the ground that no ruler would issue such an arbitrary and sanguinary decree, sanctioning the butchery of vast numbers of his innocent and unoffending subjects. But, surely, he has read history to little purpose who has not noted the excesses and enormities of despotic power,—trampling, as it often does, upon reason, justice, and mercy,—as well as the fact that religious fanaticism easily kindles into unbridled and bloody fury. The pages of Oriental, not to say Occidental, history present many examples of shocking barbarities perpetrated by the tyrant or the fanatic. According to Diodorus Siculus this same Xerxes, otherwise known as Ahasuerus, put the Medians foremost in the battle of Thermopylae on purpose that they might all be killed, because he thought that they were not fully reconciled to the loss of their national supremacy (Smith's *Bible Dict.*, Vol. i. p. 776). We might mention Mithridates, king of Pontus, who, being at war with the Romans, issued secret orders to the satraps and other officials of his realm, to slaughter upon a given day all Romans present, without distinction of age or sex. In consequence, eighty thousand persons perished in a single day. So we might cite the atrocities perpetrated by Timour Lenk, or Tamerlane, who in his march against Delhi, massacred one hundred thousand captives; and who, having stormed the city of Bagdad, piled ninety thousand corpses in the public places of the city. This same tyrant, at the

¹ Esther iii. 11, 13.

capture of Ispahan, A.D. 1387, put to death all the inhabitants, except the artists and scholars. More than seventy thousand heads were laid at his feet, and by his order were piled in the public squares, in the form of towers. At Sebsewar he piled up two thousand of the people alive, with their heads outward, and their bodies built up with mortar like stones or bricks (American Cyclopaedia, art. Timour; Van Lennep, Bible Lands, pp. 686, 687).

As examples of despotism might be mentioned the case of Ferdinand V. of Spain, who in 1492 banished three hundred thousand — some say eight hundred thousand — Jews from his dominions; also that of Louis XIV. of France, who about the year 1685, having put to death with “frightful barbarities” some thousands of Protestants, drove out many thousands more; so that France lost at that time *half a million* of her best and most industrious inhabitants (American Cyclopaedia, art. Louis XIV. of France). We might refer also to the notorious massacre of the Huguenots in France, on St. Bartholomew's Day, Aug. 24, 1572. At that time, in Paris and other French cities, not less than thirty thousand — some say one hundred thousand — innocent persons were slain in cold blood. When the news reached Rome, the cannon of St. Angelo were fired, a solemn *Te Deum* was sung, and the Pope, Gregory XIII., caused a medal to be struck, bearing on one side his own portrait, and on the other a representation of the massacre, with the legend: HUGONOTORUM STRAGES, “Slaughter of the Protestants” (see Schaff-Herzog Cyclopaedia, art. Bartholomew's Day: Dowling's History of Romanism, pp. 587–590; Edgar's Variations of Popery, pp. 271, 272; American Cyclopaedia, Vol. ii. pp. 347–349).. If such diabolical atrocities could be sanctioned by so-called Christian rulers, what might we not expect from the heathen Xerxes? And the three examples last cited occurred in lands nominally Christian, and in comparatively modern times.

The massacre of the Mamelukes in Cairo, in 1811, by Mehemet Ali; and the more dreadful butchery of the Janizaries in Constantinople in 1826, by the command of Mahmoud II. are dreadful examples of Oriental ferocity. Of these Janizaries it is said that — burned alive in their barracks, cannonaded in the At Meidan, where they made their most desperate defence, massacred singly in the streets during three months — twenty-five thousand perished, and the remainder were driven into exile (American Cyclopaedia, arts. Mamelukes, and Janizaries). The devastation of Scio and other islands of the Aegean by the Turks, in 1821 and later, is an instance of savage fanaticism worthy of Haman himself. The men were put to the sword, the cities and villas

burned, the beautiful plantations ruined, the women and children were taken captive, and sold in Smyrna and Constantinople as slaves. Within two or three months the Christian population of Scio was reduced from nearly one hundred and four thousand to two thousand.

Another massacre was that of the Nestorians by the Koords in 1843. At that time not less than ten thousand men were slain, and a much larger number of women and children were reduced to slavery. The Koords proved no less treacherous than bloodthirsty. About a thousand of the fugitives of all ages took refuge upon a rocky platform very difficult of access. The Koordish leader, Beder Khan Bey, discovered their retreat, and being unable to capture them by storm, hemmed them in, until hunger and thirst aggravated by the sultry climate constrained them to yield. The terms proposed by the Koord, and sworn to upon the Koran, were that their lives should be spared on condition of the surrender of their arms and property. Thereupon the Koords were admitted to the platform. After they had deprived their prisoners of means of defence they commenced an indiscriminate slaughter; until weary of using their weapons, they hurled the few survivors from the rocks into the river Zab beneath. Of the whole number only one escaped (*Layard, Nineveh and its Remains*, Vol. i. pp. 165-167).

A more dreadful instance of the same character occurred so recently as 1860, when the Christians of Mt. Lebanon in Syria were butchered by the Turks and Druses. The Turkish garrisons at first simply looked on; then they urged the Christians to take refuge in the castles, on condition of delivering up all the weapons they possessed. The Turks swore by the Koran that no harm should be done them. But no sooner were the Christians thus entrapped than the Druses were called in and the work of carnage begun. Every one of the hapless victims was shot down or had his throat cut on the spot. During those dreadful days of blood, the streets of Deir-el-Kamr, Hasbeya, and Zahleh flowed ankle-deep with human gore!

The attention of the civilized world was aroused; and the allied European powers interposed, and sent a commission to investigate and report. The following is the substance of the report: "Eleven thousand Christians massacred; one hundred thousand sufferers by the civil war; twenty thousand desolate widows and orphans; three thousand Christian habitations burned; and property to the value of ten millions of dollars (gold) destroyed" (*Van Lennep, Bible Lands*, pp. 743-746; *Porter's Giant Cities of Bashan, Appendix*; *Churchill's Mt. Lebanon*, Vol. iv. p. 219; *American Cyclopaedia*, art. Druses). It is refreshing to add that the ringleaders in these atrocities were afterwards executed,

and a Christian governor appointed in Lebanon. Manifestly, in the lurid light of such examples as the above, the murderous edict and heartless conduct attributed to Xerxes are perfectly credible, and entirely consistent with his character as depicted in history.

EXCURSUS I.

FASTING.¹

THE custom of fasting has been more or less conspicuous in many of the religions which have prevailed in the world. Among the religious observances of the Greeks and Romans fasting, though not entirely unknown, held a less important place than elsewhere. In Egypt we find nothing of compulsory general fasts, though a rigorous temporary abstinence was required of persons about to be initiated into the mysteries of Isis and Osiris. In the remote East the custom of fasting obtained more generally. Climate, the habits of a people, and their creed, gave it at different periods different characteristics ; but it may be pronounced to have been a recognized institution with all the more civilized nations, especially those of Asia, throughout all historic times. We find it in high estimation among the ancient Parsees of Irania. It formed a prominent feature among the mysteries of Mithras ; and found its way, together with these, over Armenia, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia Minor to Palestine, and northward to the wilds of Scythia. The ancient Chinese and Hindoos carried fasting to an unnatural excess. The Pavaka, by the due observance of which the Hindoo believer is supposed to be purified from all his sins, requires, among other things, an uninterrupted fast for twelve days (Chambers' Cyclopaedia, art. Fast). The Mohammedans, during the ninth month, Ramadan, fast rigorously every day, from sunrise till the stars appear at evening.

In the Scriptures fasting assumes a new and higher significance. Here it is purely an act of piety. The Bible represents fasting in the true sense as the accompaniment of supplication, as being in itself *an act of prayer*. Apart from its relation and reference to the Divine Being, the mere act of fasting has in the Bible no significance. Of its sanitary value we hear nothing ; in its Scriptural aspect it appears as a religious act, a penitential act, a prayer in itself. Such being the case, we cease to wonder that there is no direct mention made of "prayer" in the book of Esther. A Jew would no more think of fasting without prayer — without putting up a petition to Jehovah, than he would think

¹ Esther iv. 3, 16; ix. 31.

of eating without drinking, or of sleeping without reclining. Fasting was invariably attended with prayer, though prayer was not in every case accompanied by fasting. It is clear that fasting in the scriptural sense comprises : 1. Abstinence from food and drink for a longer or shorter period. Without this abstinence there is no proper "fast." 2. Abstinence from all earthly pleasures (Dan. ix. 3 ; x. 3). 3. Abstinence to the extent of *afflicting the body* more or less. This physical suffering, this refusal to gratify the demands of appetite, is not to be regarded as a *penance*, but as an act of self-denial subordinating the lower nature to the higher, the physical to the spiritual part of man.

Generally speaking, fasting viewed as a religious mortification or humiliation, was intended : (i.) As an expression of penitence and humility before God, in view of one's sins. It was not a self-inflicted punishment for sin, but an expression of sorrow on account of sin (1 Sam. vii. 6 ; Neh. i. 4). (ii.) It was often a prayer for the removal of some present affliction or calamity under which the individual or the nation was suffering (See Judg. xx. 26 ; Josh. vii. 6, where fasting is evidently implied). (iii.) At other times the object was to deprecate some imminent evil, to avert some impending judgment of God (2 Sam. xii. 16 ; 1 Kings xxi. 27 ; 2 Chron. xx. 3 ; Jonah iii. 5-10). (iv.) Often fasting was preparatory to seeking by prayer some special blessing from God (Matt. xvii. 21 ; Luke ii. 37 ; Acts x. 30 ; xiii. 3 ; xiv. 23 ; 1 Cor. vii. 5).

Among the Jews but one day of fasting seems to have been observed by Divine command — that of the Day of Atonement (compare Lev. xvi. 29 ; xxvii. 27 ; Num. xxix. 7). During the time of the Captivity, the Jews observed four other annual fasts, — on the seventeenth of the fourth month, in memory of the capture of Jerusalem (Jer. lxx. 6, 7) ; on the ninth day of the fifth month, in memory of the burning of the Temple (Zech. vii. 3 ; viii. 19) ; on the third of the seventh month, in memory of the slaughter of Gedaliah (Jer. xli. 2) ; and on the tenth day of the tenth month, as a memorial of the inception of the attack upon Jerusalem (Zech. viii. 19). To these was added the fast of Esther, observed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar. At a later period other fasts were added, so that the Jewish calendar includes at present some twenty-eight fast-days for each year. John Alleu, in his *Modern Judaism* (pp. 384, 385), mentions six principal fasts (see also pp. 400-419, and Rabbi David Levi's *Ceremonies of the Jews*, pp. 70, 71, 85, 120, 125 ; *Jewish Ceremonics*, by Gamaliel Ben Pedahzur, pp. 34-66). The latter very rare and curious work specifies and describes nine fast-days, and refers to several others.

The Pharisees, as appears from Luke xviii. 12, were accustomed to fast twice in each week. These fasts are said to have occurred on Mondays and Thursdays,—because the tradition was that Moses ascended Mount Sinai the second time to receive the law, on a Thursday, and descended upon Monday (Schaff-Herzog, Cyclopaedia, art. Fasting). The Talmudic treatise entitled *Taanith*, gives very minute directions respecting the proper method of fasting.

It would be beside our purpose to give a sketch of the custom of fasting as it has obtained in the Christian church. We close with the remark of Calvin: “Holy and legitimate fasting is directed to three ends. For we practise it, either as a restraint on the flesh, to preserve it from licentiousness; or as a preparation for prayers and pious meditations; or as a testimony of our humiliation in the presence of God, when we are desirous of confessing our guilt before him” (Institutes, Bk. iv. chap. 12, sec. 15).

EXCURSUS J.

THE GOLDEN SCEPTRE.¹

AFTER what has been said in the Notes on chapters iv. 11; v. 2 and viii. 4, little need be added. Our word “sceptre” is derived from the Greek *σκῆπτρον*, and that from *σκηπτεῖν*, to *lean upon*. Hence it denotes primarily a staff, or walking-stick, upon which one leans. Then it came to signify a wand, or baton, as a badge of authority, borne by kings, chiefs, and other dignitaries. In the Iliad and Odyssey, there is frequent mention of the sceptre. It is represented as of gold or gilt, or as “studded with golden nails” (see Iliad, Bk. 1. lines 15 and 246; Odyssey, Bk. 11, lines 91, 569). Professor Felton in his Notes on Iliad 1, 15, says: “The epithet *golden*, means only that the sceptre was set with golden studs or nails.” On the contrary, Mr. Bevan, in Smith’s Bible Dict., *sub voce*, says that the sceptre of the Persian monarchs was “probably of massive gold.” Mr. Layard found at Nimroud a portion of a carved ivory staff which was probably used as a sceptre (Nineveh and Babylon, Vol. i. p. 195). It has been supposed that the form of the sceptre was derived from the shepherd’s crook or staff, but this may be doubtful, since Diodorus Siculus (iii. 3) represents the sceptre of the Egyptian kings as resembling not a shepherd’s crook, but a plough! Wilkinson (Ancient Egyptians, Vol. i. p. 276) gives a curious representation of the sceptre of an Egyptian queen, which somewhat resembles a drooping lily, with stamens of great magnitude.

¹ Esther iv. 11; v. 2; viii. 4.

According to Rawlinson (Anc. Mon., Vol. iii. pp. 203–206) the sceptre of the Persian kings which is frequently represented in the hands of the monarch upon the monuments, was a plain rod about five feet in length, ornamented with a ball or apple at its upper end, and at its lower tapering nearly to a point. The king held it in his right hand, grasping it near, but not at, the thick end, and rested the thin end on the ground in his front. When he walked he planted it upright before him, as a spearman would plant his spear. When he sate he sloped it outwards, still, however, touching the ground with its point. (See representation of monarch, p. 203, *op. cit.*) The same author in Pulpit Commentary, Notes on Esther, says that the Persepolitan sculptures uniformly represent the king with a long tapering staff in his hand, which is probably the “sceptre” (*sharbit*) of Esther. According to Ker Porter the Persepolitan bas-reliefs represent Darius in the midst of his court, either walking or enthroned, but always bearing in his hand his sceptre, a slender rod or wand about equal in length to his own height, ornamented with a small knob at the summit. Dr. Jamieson in his Commentary, says that in the Assyrian alabasters found in Nimroud and Khorsabad, the king's sceptre appears as a slender rod, without any knob or ornament. In the Khorsabad reliefs the rod is painted red, *doubtless to represent gold*; proving that the “golden sceptre” was a simple wand of that precious metal, commonly held in the right hand, with one end resting on the ground, and that whether the king was sitting or walking.

Among the Greeks the royal sceptre (*σκῆπτρον*) was a staff adorned with a knob or a flower, which, as early as Homer's time, was the attribute of gods and of rulers descended from the gods. The sceptre was a valued heirloom in royal families. The sceptre serving as the emblem of judicial power, also employed by ambassadors and heralds, was somewhat shorter, and was styled *ράβδος* (see Guhl and Koner, pp. 184, 185). The Hebrew word שָׁבֵן (later, שְׁמִינִי), seems to have much the same latitude of meaning as the Greek word mentioned above. It denotes primarily a stick or staff, a rod for chastisement, a walking-stick, a shepherd's crook, then a sceptre. In Lev. xxvii. 32; Ezek. xx. 37, and apparently in Micah vii. 14, it refers to the crook of the shepherd. It is, however, worthy of note that the Septuagint, in the last three cases, employs *ράβδος* instead of *σκῆπτρον*.

King Saul seems to have used his spear for a sceptre or ensign of authority (1 Sam. xviii. 10; xxii. 6). Indeed, according to Justin (Lib. 43, c. 3) kings in olden times were accustomed to use the spear in this way. Dr. Jahn (Archaeology, sec. 226) agrees with Rawlinson above

cited, as to the form and dimensions of the sceptre, and thinks that the use of this emblem of authority was first suggested by the pastoral staff borne by shepherds; or by those staves which in ancient times persons of high rank carried for show and ornament (Gen. xxxviii. 18; Num. xvii. 7; Ps. xxiii. 4). And Ezek. xix. 11: "She had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule," seems to intimate the primitive origin and simple form of the sceptre. It should be added that, according to Botta and Bonomi, the Assyrian sceptre, as represented upon the sculptures at Nineveh, was shorter than that described above, and of a different form. The reader will find on page 60 *infra*, an accurate representation of the shorter sceptre, though according to Bonomi, some regard it as intended to represent a mace instead of a sceptre. Even Rawlinson regards such figures as representing maces, and designates them by that name (Anc. Mon., Vol. i. pp. 458, 459).

EXCURSUS K.

FATE OF ROYAL FAVORITES.¹

FEW mortals have had a more varied experience of the vicissitudes and fickleness of fortune than have royal favorites of both sexes. As few have climbed to more dizzy heights of pride and power, so few have plunged into darker and deeper abysses of woe; and in many cases the downfall has been as sudden and unlooked-for as the elevation was rapid and dazzling. The pages of history abound with examples, many of them as startling and tragic as that of Haman. We need not cite the downfall of Pharaoh's chief baker (Gen. xl. 22), and the suicidal end of Ahithophel, the favorite of Absalom (2 Sam. xvii. 23). We are told of Cambyses that, in order to show the steadiness of his hand and his skill in archery, he sent an arrow to the heart of his young cup-bearer, son of the favorite Prexaspes (Herod. iii. 34, 35). Pythius, a Lydian, was the man who freely offered to give Xerxes two thousand talents of silver, and some four millions of gold darics. Yet the cruel king, upon a trivial offence, ordered that the son of this "royal benefactor" should be cut in two, and that the army should pass between the severed halves (Herod. vii. 27-29, 38, 39). Parmenio was Alexander's most trusted general; his son Philotas had been one of the monarch's most intimate and favored friends. The father and son were accused of treason. Philotas was stoned, and Parmenio assassinated by order of Alexander. Clitus, the foster-brother of the same tyrant, had saved Alexander's life at the Granicus, yet was after-

¹ Esther vii. 7-10.

wards slain by him in a drunken revel. Herod the Great, as we know, put to death his beautiful and beloved wife Mariamne, and his two sons Alexander and Aristobulus, and ordered the execution of his eldest son, Antipater. Herod Antipas, with his paramour Herodias, was condemned to perpetual banishment by order of Caligula. Herod Agrippa, son of Aristobulus, was thrown into prison by Tiberius, where he lay till the next reign. For a long period, Sejanus was the favorite of Tiberius, and managed the affairs of the empire according to his own corrupt liking; but the emperor at last became suspicious of the favorite, and caused him and all his family to be slain. Nero, after having put to death his mother Agrippina, and his tutor Seneca the philosopher, killed by a kick Poppaea, his paramour. He afterwards condemned to death his most successful general, Corbulo,—“a sentence which the old soldier anticipated by suicide.” Tigellinus, a most infamous and despicable creature of Nero, was probably the vilest and bloodiest of royal favorites that ever pandered to the vices and humored the caprices of a besotted ruler. Yet, under a subsequent reign, this paragon of villainy met the fate he so justly deserved.

To come down to modern times, we need only refer to the sad end of Cardinal Wolsey, the favorite of Henry the Eighth of England; and that of the duke of Somerset, another favorite of the same ruler. The fate of Jane Shore, the beautiful mistress of king Edward IV., has furnished the theme for a celebrated tragedy by Rowe; tradition representing her as perishing of cold and hunger in a ditch, thenceforth known as “Shoreditch.” The axe of the executioner ended the earthly career of the earl of Essex, and Sir Walter Raleigh, the favorites of Elizabeth. He whom Shakespeare styles, “the deep-revolving, wily Buckingham,” after having assisted Richard III. in gaining the throne, fell a victim to that monarch’s jealousy. Monmouth, the favorite of Charles II., was put to death by James II. Cardinal Richelieu, at one time the favorite of Maria de’ Medici, was afterward repudiated and most bitterly hated by her. Necker, the able financier of Louis XVI. of France, was driven with insult, abuse, and personal peril into retirement at Coppet in Switzerland, where he died.

Such are a few of the examples of the fate of royal favorites which the annals of the past afford. Equally with the case of Haman, they exemplify the freaks of fortune, and the caprices, ingratitude, and cruelties of arbitrary power.

EXCURSUS L.

COURIERS.¹

רְצִים occurs four times in the Book of Esther, and always with the article. The courier system was new in the time of Xerxes, and its singularity gave it the article, just as the telegraph, the telephone, the railroad have it with us. Xenophon (*Cyropaedia*, Book viii. chap. vi. 17) gives an account of the instituting of the courier system which he attributes to Cyrus the Great. Herodotus (Book viii. 98) tells how Xerxes used couriers to convey to the Persians the fact of his defeat at Salamis. He says that “nothing mortal travels so fast as these Persian messengers”; also that the name by which they were called was ἀγαρητοίς. Gibbon (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, i. 63, 64) says: “The advantage of receiving the earliest intelligence, and of conveying their orders with celerity, induced the emperors to establish throughout their extensive dominions the regular institution of posts. Houses were everywhere erected at the distance of five or six miles; each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays it was easy to travel a hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads. The use of the posts was allowed to those who claimed it by an imperial mandate; but though originally intended for the public service, it was sometimes indulged to the business or convenience of private citizens.”

There were couriers upon foot and couriers upon horses. The former were the Latin *cursores*, and these couriers were called by the Greeks ἡμεροδρόμοι. They were supposed to have the power to run through the whole day. Livy (*Hist.*, Bk. xxxi. c. 24) says of them, *ingens die uno cursu emetientes spatium*. He seems to have thought that they took their name from their being able to run a great distance in a single day. Herodotus (Bk. vi. c. 105) says: “The generals sent off to Sparta a herald, one Pheidippides, who was by birth an Athenian, and by profession and practice a trained runner (ἡμεροδρόμον).” Plato (*Protagoras*, 336) says: “What you ask is as great an impossibility to me as if you would have me run a race with Crison of Himera, when in his prime, or with some one of the long or day-course runners (ἡμεροδρόμοι).”

The רְצִים are mentioned in 2 Sam. xv. 1: “Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men (רְצִים) to run before him.” The royal messengers and body-guard of the Jewish kings were called רְצִים (2 Kings x. 25).

¹ Esther viii. 10, 14.

EXCURSUS M.

COURSERS.¹

THE שָׁרַכְתִּים were a superior breed of horses, famous for their great speed. Gesenius (in Thesaurus) says : שָׁרַכְתִּים *equus generosicr et velocissimus*. In 1 Kings iv. 28, שָׁרַכְתִּים *distinguuntur a סְרֵבֶת*. Fuerst (Hebrew Lexicon) says : שָׁרַכְתִּים is a *racer, a swift horse, a courser*.

“Mules, the offspring of mares.” This is a *locus vexatissimus*. אֲלֹמְנָתִים signifies a kind of mules, *filiī equarum*. Pliny (Nat. Hist., Vol. viii. p. 44) says : ex asino et equa geniti sunt nobiliores quam qui ex equo et asina. But compare Excursus A., *sub voce*.

EXCURSUS N.

TRIBUTE.²

THE subject of tribute furnishes an interesting study both as it relates to the Jews and to the nations to whom they became tribute-payers. The Hebrew word בֵּן is usually derived from בָּנַה, which means *to wear or waste away*, because tribute is sure to waste away the people who pay it. But Fuerst derives בֵּן from an unused root בָּנַה, which means *to divide or separate*, then *to number, measure, or distribute*, e.g. a tax (vid. Fuerst's Hebrew Lexicon). Gesenius derives it from בָּנַה, which means *to divide*. In his Thesaurus he says : Nuper quidem Studerus vulgarem derivationem a בָּנַה ita explicuit, ut בֵּן pr. sit contritio virium, dein concr. contritus, substratus (quidni saltem confectus? coll. בֵּן, Job vi. 14, nam illa potestas in radice vix inest); sed nil dubito, quin aliter judicasset vir doctissimus, si arctam necessitudinem inter vcc. בָּנַה, סְהָנָה et בָּנָה reputasset. Thesaurus, *sub voce*. The LXX render the verse (x. 1) Ἔγραψε δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῆς τε γῆς καὶ τῆς θαλάσσης.

There is no specific word for tribute. The idea is generic, being embraced in ἔγραψε. The Vulgate renders it (x. 1) : Rex vero Annerus omnem terram, et cunctas maris insulas fecit tributarias. Here the idea is generic also. So that the meaning of בֵּן in x. 1 is indefinite or all-embracing. Three kinds of tribute were common : (1) in money; (2) in products; (3) in bond-service, or personal labor. The word בֵּן in x. 1 includes them all.

The Jews were very poor tribute-payers to their conquerors. They acknowledged no one as their sovereign but Jehovah. To him they gave yearly their capitation-tax of half a shekel, as an acknowledgment that he was king and they were his subjects. Even as late as the time

¹ Esther viii. 10.² Esther x. 1.

of Christ the Jews asked : “ What thinkest thou ? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not ” (Matt. xxii. 17) ? They had conscientious scruples about it, and they were ever a rebellious and stiff-necked people, as their conquerors were sure to find. The Hebrew word **תְּנִסָּה** occurs in the Old Testament twenty-four times, and is translated usually by *tribute*. Three times it is rendered *levy*; because it refers to the men who were paying the tribute by personal service.

Herodotus tells us that Darius, the father of Xerxes, was the first Persian king who levied a general tribute upon his subjects. “ And now, when his power was established firmly throughout all the kingdoms, the first thing that he did was to set up a carving in stone, which showed a man mounted upon a horse, with an inscription in these words following : ‘ Darius, son of Hystaspes, by aid of his good horse (here followed the horse’s name), and of his good groom Oebares, got himself the kingdom of the Persians.’ ” This he set up in Persia ; and afterwards he proceeded to establish twenty governments of the kind which the Persians call satrapies, assigning to each its governor, and fixing the tribute which was to be paid him by the several nations. And generally he joined together in one satrapy the nations that were neighbors ; but sometimes he passed over the nearer tribes, and put in their stead those who were more remote. The following is an account of these governments, and of the yearly tribute which they paid to the king : “ Such as brought their tribute in silver were ordered to pay according to the Babylonian talent ; while the Euboic was the standard measure for such as brought gold. Now the Babylonian talent contains seventy Euboic minae. During all the reign of Cyrus, and afterward when Cambyses ruled, there were no fixed tributes, but the nations severally brought gifts to the king. On account of this and other like doings, the Persians say that Darius was a huckster, Cambyses a master, and Cyrus a father ; for Darius looked to making a gain in everything, Cambyses was harsh and reckless, while Cyrus was gentle, and procured them all manner of goods ” (Herodotus, History, Bk. iii. 88, 89, Rawlinson’s transl.). Herodotus proceeds to enumerate the nations which compose each of the twenty satrapies, with the sum which each paid. Then he says : “ If the Babylonian money here spoken of be reduced to the Euboic scale, it will make nine thousand five hundred and forty such talents ; and if the gold be reckoned at thirteen times the worth of silver, the Indian gold-dust will come to four thousand six hundred and eighty talents. Add these two amounts together, and the whole revenue which came in to Darius, year by year, will be found to be in Euboic money fourteen thousand five hundred and sixty talents, not to mention parts of a talent.”

"Such was the revenue which Darius derived from Asia and a small part of Libya. Later in his reign the sum was increased by the tribute of the islands, and of the nations of Europe as far as Thessaly. The great king stores away the tribute which he receives after this fashion, — he melts it down, and while it is in a liquid state runs it into earthen vessels, which are afterwards removed, leaving the metal in a solid mass. When money is wanted, he coins as much of this bullion as the occasion requires." (Herodotus, iii. 95, 96, Rawlinson's transl.). Canon Rawlinson remarks on the sum mentioned above: "Taking the lowest estimate which his [Herodotus's] numbers allow, the annual revenue of Persia was about three and a half millions of our [the English] money." Three and a half million pounds sterling would be equal to seventeen and a half million dollars. When we remember that ancient money was worth — i.e. cost to obtain it, and had a purchasing power — fifteen times as much as the same money now, we see that the annual tribute paid to the great king amounted to the considerable sum of two hundred and sixty-two million dollars in our time. Mr. Grote reckons the sum of Darius's tribute as about one third larger than this (vid. Grote's History of Greece, Vol. iii. p. 201). This immense sum was designed to meet the expenses of the court in the time of peace. The tribute referred to in the text (x. 1) was, doubtless, a heavy tax laid upon all the countries subject to the rule of Xerxes, to repair the losses sustained in the disastrous Grecian campaign.

In the tenth chamber of the palace at Khorsabad, M. Botta discovered sculptures and inscriptions which illustrate the method of delivering the *tribute* which the people in the Assyrian and Persian kingdoms paid their sovereigns. "The first eight persons on the upper line to the right who follow Tartan, the chief of tribute, wear the close turbans or caps, and are dressed in long tunics, with short outer garments rounded at the corners and fringed, sometimes with a clasp at the waist, and boots laced up in front. The first carries the model of a city, indicative of his office of governor or sultan of a province. These officers — apparently native chiefs of the subdued province or city, שְׂלָמִים מִדֵּנֶתָּה, the *Sultani Medinetha*, of the court of Nebuchadnezzar in the time of the prophet Daniel — were summoned, among others, to come to the dedication of the image which that monarch had set up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. This officer is followed by three persons, the first two bearing two cups, the produce or manufacture of the province; and the third a sealed bag upon his shoulders, containing the amount of tribute, either in gold-dust or precious stones, furnished by the province of which the venerable per-

son at the head of the procession was the sultan or governor; or the tribute may possibly be pieces of gold, such as Naaman, the captain of the king of Syria, brought as payment for his cure; or such as Abraham paid for the cave of Machpelah, ‘current money with the merchant’” (Bonomi, Nineveh and its Palaces, p. 172, revised ed. pp. 151, 152).

From the above we can see how humiliating was the process of tribute-paying. No wonder that spirited and high-minded princes were unwilling to undergo it, and used all the means at their command to be independent. Every year they were not only to part with their treasure, but to be put to shame in the presence of their hated conquerors. The writer of this saw in the British Museum the black obelisk of Shalmanezer II., the inscriptions on which show the Shuities bringing from the Euphrates elephant’s tusks, staves of precious wood, bags of costly metals, and other treasures as their tribute to the Assyrian king. On another side of the same obelisk are carved an elephant and several monkeys, which are being brought as tribute from some distant people.

The money paid for the support of the court, or central government, was only a part of the *tribute* which the Persian subject was obliged to pay. Over each of the satrapies, which varied in number from twenty to twenty-nine, Darius placed a satrap, or supreme civil governor, charged with the collection and transmission of the revenue, the administration of justice, the maintenance of order, and the general supervision of the territory. These satraps were nominated by the king at his pleasure from any class of his subjects, and held office for no definite term, but simply until recalled, being liable to deprivation or death at any moment without other formality than the presentation of the royal *firman*. While, however, they remained in office they were despotic — they represented the great king, and were clothed with a portion of his majesty — they had palaces (*βασιλεία*), courts, body-guards, parks, or ‘paradises,’ vast trains of eunuchs and attendants, well-filled seraglios. They wielded the power of life and death. They assessed the tribute on the several towns and villages within their jurisdiction at their pleasure, and appointed deputies — called sometimes, like themselves, satraps — over cities or districts within their province, whose office was regarded as one of great dignity. They exacted from the provincials for their own support and that of their court, over and above the tribute due to the crown, whatever sum they regarded them as capable of furnishing. Favors, and even justice, had to be purchased from them by gifts. They were sometimes guilty of gross outrages on the persons and honor of their subjects. Nothing restrained their tyranny but such sense of right

as they might happen to possess, and the fear of removal or execution, if the voice of complaint reached the monarch (Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, Vol. iii. p. 418). "Persia paid no tribute, and was not counted as a satrapy. Its inhabitants were, however, bound, when the king passed through their country to bring him gifts according to their means" (Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, Vol. iii. p. 420). "Persian subjects in many parts of the Empire paid, besides their tribute, a water-rate, which is expressly said to have been very productive. The rivers of the Empire were the king's; and when water was required for irrigation, a state officer superintended the opening of the sluices, and regulated the amount of the precious fluid which might be drawn off by each tribe or township. For the opening of the sluices a large sum was paid to the officer, which found its way into the coffers of the state."

"Further, it appears that such things as fisheries—and if so, probably salt-works, mines, quarries, and forests—were regarded as crown property, and yielded large sums to the revenue. They appear to have been farmed to responsible persons, who undertook to pay at a certain fixed rate, and made what profit they could by the transaction. The price of commodities thus farmed would be greatly enhanced to the consumer" (*Ibid.*, p. 422). "While the claims of the crown upon its subjects were definite and could not be exceeded, the satrap was at liberty to make any exactions that he pleased beyond them. There is every reason to believe that he received no stipend, and that, consequently, the burden of supporting him, his body-guard, and his court was intended to fall on the province which had the benefit of his superintendence. Like a Roman proconsul, he was to pay himself out of the pockets of his subjects; and like that class of persons, he took care to pay himself highly. It has been calculated that one satrap of Babylon drew from his province annually in actual coin a sum equal to £100,000 [\$500,000] of our money. We can scarcely doubt that the claims made by the provincial governors were, on the average, at least equal to those of the crown; and they had the disadvantage of being irregular, uncertain, and purely arbitrary" (*Ibid.*, p. 423). Canon Rawlinson estimates the population of the Persian empire during the reigns of Darius IIystaspis and Xerxes I, at fifty millions of souls (vid. his *Anc. Mon.*, Vol. iii. p. 422, note).

Keil says: "The Persian empire, in its whole extent from India to Ethiopia, must have contained a population of at least 100,000,000, and the number of Jews in the realm must have amounted to from two to three millions" (Keil, *Commentary on the Book of Esther*, p. 308).

EXCURSUS Q.

THE UNWRITTEN NAME.

Tacitus tells us that at the funeral of Junia, the sister of Marcus Brutus and the wife of Caius Cassius, the images of twenty of the most illustrious Roman families were carried in the procession ; but the images of Brutus and Cassius were left standing in their places, and “for that very reason they shone with pre-eminent lustre.” (Tacitus, Annals iii. 76.)

Nowhere in the Book of Esther does any distinctive name of God occur. Neither is any title of Deity found in Solomon's Song. We read these books from beginning to end, and see traces of God, his love, wisdom, power, yea, the marks of all his glorious attributes ; but no divine appellation is there spelled out. This is a significant fact and draws attention to these books.

Various reasons are given why in the Book of Esther there is no mention of the divine name.

1. Some account for it by the low state of piety among the Jews who remained in the land of their captivity.

God is to us what we are to him. If we seek him and honor him, doing his will, often calling upon his name, he will reveal himself unto us by clear and manifold tokens of his power and love. But if we neglect him, walking in other counsel, seeking other objects, preferring the creature before the Creator, then we lose the symbols, the tokens of the Divine One, grope in darkness and fail to find the manifest helps and encouragements which Abraham and Isaac, Moses and David, Ezra and Nehemiah, enjoyed.

Mordecai and Esther, the principal characters in this book, perhaps belonged to that class of Jews who preferred the luxuries and honors of Persia to the self-denials and hardships of Palestine. They were not, to an eminent degree, spiritually minded. Sixty years before the transactions recorded in the Book of Esther, Zerubbabel had led back to Palestine fifty thousand of his countrymen, rebuilt the temple, and dedicated it to Jehovah. Read the account of this in the Book of Ezra, and you discover no lack of the *name* of God there. Those Jews openly and courageously walked with Jehovah, and they enjoyed all the visible signs of his presence.

Twenty years after Esther had been made queen, Ezra received his commission to go to Jerusalem, with a considerable company of Israelites, with the purpose of reforming the moral and religious customs

of the people. Jehovah is known and worshipped, in his distinctive names, by those who composed this band. And thirteen years after that, when Nehemiah, the devout statesman, went up to the dilapidated capital of the land which above all others he loved, there is not anything to indicate that the God of his fathers was not addressed by all his titles.

Some scholars claim that the Jews who remained in Persia did not walk closely with God, did not serve him with holy boldness and zeal, and therefore his name and special visible presence were not with them.

Some rabbis say that Mordecai wrote the Book of Esther, not mentioning the name of God lest when the story should be read by heathen lips the holy name of the Jews' God should be defiled. Not even the Jews in Palestine ever pronounced the name Jehovah. They shrank with secret dread from having any of the titles of their Deity found in the literature or conversation of the accursed nations.

We should state that there is in the Book of Esther no mention of sacrifices ; of prayer ; of worship, other than fasting ; of the holy land ; of the temple ; or of that patriotic feeling which is such a marked feature in the Jewish character. Everything distinctively Jewish seems to be sunk out of sight, and the writer is intent upon one thing — the exhibition of a Providence which is ubiquitous, and adequate to the needs of his people.

Bishop Wordsworth claims that we find a sufficient cause for concealment of the divine name in the fact that the Jews who remained in Persia loved Susa rather than Zion, "the courts of earthly princes more than the church of the living God." They chose the path of ease and selfish pleasure rather than the rugged and dangerous ways in which the people of God have ever, in this their weary pilgrimage, been called to walk. The Lord recompensed them according to their righteousness. They did not profess him, and he withheld his glory from them.

2. Another explanation of the absence of God's name from the Book of Esther is that the book is a literal translation from the official records of the Persian court.

If this were true, we should expect the book not only to breathe the spirit, and abound in allusions to the customs, of the people to whom the Jews were subject, but to retain their idioms and phraseology. Canon Rawlinson has given a list of purely Persian words found in the book. The entire document is transfused with the aroma of the people over whom Xerxes proudly held sway.

This view of the origin of the book may enable us to explain some

things otherwise obscure ; but it is by no means the key that fits this lock. The difficulties that it creates are more than those which it removes. The official records of the Persian empire were written in verse, and have the stamp of poetic rhythm. Were this book a literal translation this element could not be concealed. We need not deny that it is possible that God should excerpt from the diary of a voluptuous and atrocious heathen monarch what he would put into his volume as a part of his holy word, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." A rose may be plucked from a dunghill, and that rose may adorn the brow of a queen. So the most useful lesson for the instruction of the church may grow out of the conduct of notoriously wicked men. But a rose is not a dunghill, nor is the Book of Esther necessarily a literal extract from the official diary of Xerxes.

We have it on the highest authority, that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; and that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God". Facts, nevertheless, may be derived from any source. They may be recorded by a sacred penman, and thus become a portion of the word which God has given to man. There is no objection to the idea that whoever wrote this book had the records of the Persian court before him when he wrote. There is a marvellous historical accuracy and minuteness of detail in the book which can best be explained in this way. But it scarcely harmonizes with our ideas of inspiration and of the sacredness of the Bible to think that one of its books was taken entire from the chronicles of such a king as Xerxes.

3. The better and more probable explanation is that Mordecai or Ezra, or some unknown devout Jew, was the author of the book ; and that of design the name of God does not appear in it. God is in the book. His overruling providence is apparent on every page. His love for his people, his thwarting and punishing of them that hate him and his are everywhere visible. The book thus considered is, without a divine name written in it, in perfect harmony with the ways and works of God.

Archbishop Trench says : "It was observed by one wise man to another that his questions taught more than other people's answers." And he adds : "The silence of Scripture is often more instructive than the teaching of other books." One of the strongest proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is its silence on many topics concerning which an uninspired mind would have spoken. Robert Boyle says : "The Scripture is like a dial, in which we are informed by the shadow as

well as by the light." Archer Butler remarks about the Bible : " What we see is holy ; but what we see not is holier still."

Many a time to repress an unhallowed curiosity, or to exercise his people's faith, or to vindicate his own prerogative, or, it may be, to evolve his own plans into clearer and grander harmony, God throws a veil about some important matter. There is, however, no concealment in the Bible upon matters that concern personal duty and the salvation of the soul. All those points are made as clear as noonday. Repentance of sin and faith in the Crucified One cannot be made simpler or more radiant. Upon these things there is no theorizing, even. The great duties of life are dogmatically asserted in the Bible. "Thou shalt not kill." "Thou shalt not steal." The processes by which the results are arrived at are not given. We cannot see the reasons of things as they present themselves to the divine mind. And if this book be God's word, it must have concealments in it, or it would not have the seal of the All-wise One on it. A beautiful book of the Bible, without the Divine name may yet have a Divine impress, even as the diamond, the most resplendent thing in the mineral kingdom, has that impress, though bearing no inscription telling its author.

The Bible is as remarkable for what is *not* written in it as for what is written. This silence constitutes one of the most important elements of grandeur in the word of God. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing" (Prov. xxv. 2). How many times Jesus charged his disciples that they "should tell no man" that he was the Christ, or blazon abroad his wonderful works. Is not this explanation of it found in the words of Isaiah : "He shall not strive nor cry ; neither shall any man hear his voice in the street"? Are we not taught that one of the most marked evidences of the Messiahship of Jesus was his silence? The Son of God did not shout and cry in the world. That was not the evidence of his divinity. He came like the sunbeam, softly, silently, gently on the world, and did his saving work. He came like the dew, noiselessly blessing humanity ; not like the tempest with roaring winds, or the riving lightning, or pealing thunder. The truly divine element in God or man is the silent one. Noise, display, demonstration, parade are of the earth, earthly, or belong to the coarser forms of selfishness.

If we take the life of Christ as given to us by the evangelists and consider it as one whole, how large a part of it is concealed! Who can tell the day of his birth ; the day of his baptism ; the exact time of his entering upon his public ministry ; the number of parables or discourses he spoke ; the number of miracles he wrought ; the

number of converts he made ; the number in his audience on any particular day ; the number of cities he visited ? Who can tell what he did the first twelve years of his life ? Who can tell anything about the eighteen years just preceding his entrance upon his public ministry ? No epoch in his life, except his passion, his resurrection, and ascension is so designated that its precise anniversary can be determined. How unlike many human biographies !

Then who can reproduce the stature, the mien, the features of Jesus ? Raphael has done all that art can do to give us a picture of the Crucified One ; but we have only the product of Raphael's imagination. Jesus did not sit for his portrait, nor did artist carve his bust. *Concealment* characterizes the life of the Son of Man.

These things being true we are not surprised to find two books of Sacred Scripture in which the name of God does not appear. God would have us love and reverence his character and delight in his spiritual power and presence, rather than stand aghast before any symbol of himself expressed in letters.

Consider the rose that blossoms so beautifully at your feet. You cannot spell out in letters the name of God on it ; but is not the witness there ? Put it under the microscope ; is not its perfection of parts divine ? Are not the tinting and scolloping divine ? Is not the fragrance beyond what human skill can produce ? Is not the life-principle in it superhuman ? It would be superfluous to write upon the rose : God made me.

Consider the human hand, study its parts, its powers, its adaptations. You cannot find the three letters "God" written there ; but how plainly God is seen in the wisdom and benevolence displayed in the mechanism of the hand. "For every house is builded by some man ; but he that built all things is God" (Heb. iii. 4).

We may, then, explain the absence of the name of God from the book of Esther *by design*. It is thus in harmony with the ways and the works of God.

4. Though the name of God is not written in letters in the Book of Esther, his presence and power, all his adorable attributes, are manifest in every part of it.

A kind and loving Father, caring for his children, comes to view at every point. When his children are caught in the net which the wicked have spread for them, he does not forsake them, but provides means for their deliverance. Let the wickedness of the enemy rise to its greatest height, God rises up over his own loved ones as a wall of fire for their protection. He is ever on the side of virtue and innocence.

He turns the plots of the wicked to their own destruction. Haman is hung on his own gallows, and Mordecai is rewarded for his bold stand for the people of God.

In the whole annals of mankind you can find no passage of history, profane or sacred, that in its spirit and atmosphere has more of God in it than the Book of Esther. There is no need that the Almighty One should proclaim his name, to be seen and felt in all the fulness of his glory and power.

Read the story of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, omitting the name of God. Is it needed there? Do not the deeds proclaim their Author? When it reads; God divided the Red sea; God sent manna to feed his people; God caused the water to flow out of the rock, is there any need of the word "God"? Can any but God perform such things?

So when, in this Book of Esther, we see a plot cunningly devised, having on its side all the power and influence of the greatest worldly empire then existing; when we see the axe lifted over the neck of this people, ready to fall and exterminate them; yet a hand stretched out, mighty enough and pitying enough to deliver them and turn what was intended for their overthrow into the means of their glory, is there any need of saying: God did this? The protection, the wisdom, the infinitude of holy attributes shining out on every page, tell who delivered the endangered people. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." But in this Book of Esther God is declared more signally than in the heavens. Not only wisdom, but love shines here. "God is love." We do not know that love is displayed in the ordering of the planets. Wisdom and power are visible in the hosts that deck our nightly sky. But the distinctive attribute of our God is not seen in these works, as it is in the events recorded in the book before us. From the first chapter to the last we are made to wonder at the exhibition of a divine love, which is ever present to guard and keep his chosen ones. Wherever pure, infinite Love reveals her face, God, in all the plenitude of his being, is present.

5. From the literary character of the Bible, we should expect some books, like this, to represent the anonymous style of composition.

One of the marvellous features of the Bible is its variety, the multiplicity of forms in which it sets before us divine truth. Every ennobling kind of poetry is found in the Bible. In it is history in all its phases; there are orations, epistles, hymns, sermons, parables, proverbs, prophecies, narratives, allegories, biographies, and dialogues; every literary device — such as acrostic, alliteration, and puns; every

figure of rhetoric is found here. Among its authors are two kings, two fishermen, one lawgiver, one judge, one premier, one governor, one priest, one farmer, one tent-maker, one publican, one physician, more than one missionary, several prophets and poets. Women may in a sense be reckoned among its authors. Every legitimate method of attracting human attention is resorted to in God's word. No taste which man should cultivate can fail of its needed food here.

Voltaire said of the Book of Ruth that for simplicity and grace there was nothing in the ancient classics that equalled it. Many a youth who has turned with dislike from the Assembly's Catechism has read with avidity Pilgrim's Progress, though the latter teaches the same doctrines as the former. Pilgrim's Progress presents the truth with an appeal to the imagination. The names of the doctrines are not given, but the doctrines themselves are made most prominent. One most effective way to inculcate doctrines is to conceal their titles.

Wherein is the charm of the Lord's prayer? The word "God" is not in it; but the mercy and the love, the providing and delivering compassion, of God are there. He sits enthroned in every clause of it, and we think of nothing but God when we recite it. The power of this prayer of prayers is in its laying aside the formal recognition of Deity; in its making no attempt to address the cold intellect of man; but in speaking at once to the heart in the language of man's needs.

In the words "Then shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place," we find no title of Deity; but who can read the words in their connection without feeling that the idea of God is prominent? In the author's mind, "another place" was nothing less than the throne of God. Here is the language of faith, which does not care to syllable its object, but rather describes it by its bringing deliverance to an imperilled nation. One Jew speaking to another would put no other interpretation on such words.

The first Book of Maccabees, consisting of sixteen chapters, has not the name of God in it. It is a kind of theistic narrative,—the Deity made much more prominent to the mind because he is not apparent to sense.

De Quincy divides all literature into two classes,—literature of knowledge and literature of power. The one is for construction, and has to do with the thinking faculties; the other is to move men, and has to do with man's actions and moral nature. Milton's Paradise Lost or Homer's Iliad does not prove anything. There is no demonstration in them; but they stir the souls of men. They speak to the heart and fill the soul with quickening images. Longfellow's Psalm

of Life has been an inspiration to many a one whose dull intellect would have slept till the crack of doom. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." With the heart he grasps the noblest and grandest facts of his being.

The Book of Esther is addressed to the heart of humanity. It does not tell us in every verse, or in any verse, that God watches over and protects his people; but we see him doing it, and the impression is made at every step, deep and strong, that we are reading a recital of the deeds of him who inhabiteth eternity. Many a person who would turn from the Book of Exodus as only simple prose, has opened the Book of Esther and read it with avidity. His attention is riveted by a series of events which are ascribed to no author, and the conviction is forced upon him that none but God could work so marvellously.

The Jews rank this book next to the Pentateuch in importance. It is a wonderful tragedy with the *dénouement* averted. Jehovah is the chief actor, all the more plainly seen because his name is not written.

One of the most attractive kinds of composition is that in which actions are recorded, and from them the reader must spell out the names of the actors. Much of the instruction of our Lord belongs to this class. Turn the parable of the Prodigal Son into simple narrative. How you have shorn it of beauty and of strength! As it stands it is the "gospel within the gospel." The name of God does not occur in it; but we think of nothing but God as a loving and merciful Father when we read it. So the Book of Esther is an Old Testament parable, in which the concealments furnish one of the chief attractions. We read it and spontaneously exclaim: How wonderfully God interposed to save his people from the jaws of the devouring lion. Then our faith in the divine love and protection is strengthened, and we rejoice that "He who keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He is mighty to save all that put their trust in him.

6. An inspired book without the divine name suggests first, that God is in many things where now we see him not!

How many of us receive blessings day by day, hour by hour, without remembering who is the author! The water that we drink, who created it? We can analyze it—two parts of hydrogen to one of oxygen; but who could manufacture it to supply our homes? The air that we breathe; how dependent we are on its quality and quantity. We can tell its constituents, but we could not supply ourselves with it for one hour. The food that we eat is wrought into blood and tissue and muscle by a force which neither the scalpel nor the microscope can detect.

We are in this wonderful laboratory of God and witness his working, but how little we are moved by it to own and bless the hand divine by which all that we have and are consist! The poet wrote: "An undevout astronomer is mad." Is it not madness, too, to live in the midst of blessings innumerable and never adore the Giver? The name of God is not written on the health which we enjoy, on the business talents which we possess, on the social gifts with which we are endowed, on the scholarship which we have, on the thousand comforts and joys of our homes; but their very nature proves them divine. Unless gratitude and love are awakened in our hearts towards the all-bountiful Giver of these benefactions, how can we hope to spend countless ages with him, extolling his goodness and celebrating his praise?

Secondly, is not a lesson suggested here with reference to the trials and troubles of life? What a volume it would take to describe the sorrows and griefs of some, whose hearts are bleeding as their eyes run over these pages! You look back over the past of your pilgrimage, scanning it step by step, and all seems dark and gloomy. You try to find some visible token of the Divine One in the discipline, the losses, and disappointments which have come upon you. Your soul often cries out: How long, O Lord, before these dark and unmeaning calamities shall be past?

Does not the Book of Esther cast a ray of light on your condition? What disasters were imminent to God's people at that time! What a huge, black cloud was ready to burst and pour all its contents on them! What sure and sudden destruction threatened the whole Jewish people! And how wonderfully the deliverance came! As you read the book no name of God appears; but how manifest are his saving love and power! On every page we trace the workings of the divine hand, shaping all things for the rescue of them that love him.

In our trials, our misfortunes, and perplexities God is present. We may not with the dull ear of sense hear his voice, or with the glazed eyes of earth behold his glory; but he is causing all things to work together for the good of them that trust in him, and is transmuting our sorrows into light and joy eternal. When on the other shore we see as we are seen, it will be manifest to us that in these dark places of our pilgrimage the presence and power of the Almighty One were with us and it was his loving hand that guarded us. "The Lord is thy keeper." God is with us, though we see him not. When human strength and wisdom fail us we can look up to the throne where the ever-living and all-loving One sits, being assured that if we are his children "enlargement and deliverance will arise" to us.

EXCUSUS P.

THE SEPTUAGINT ESTHER.

SINCE the Greek version of Esther contains remarkable additions and variations frequently referred to in this volume, we have thought best to give its English translation. A very exact rendering of the Septuagint into our language is published by S. Bagster and Sons. As this is easily accessible we have chosen to become indebted to that of Charles Thomson. In doing so, we hope to call further attention to a work of which American Bible scholars, at least, should not be ignorant.—“The Old Covenant, commonly called the Old Testament, translated from the Septuagint. By Charles Thomson, late Secretary of the Congress of the United States. Printed by Jane Aitkin. Philadelphia. 1808.” Prof. Francis Bowen, in the Princeton Review for Jan. 1883. has represented the excellences of this translation. As Thomson does not give the additions, we have borrowed these from Bagster, and mark them by brackets.

[In the second year of the reign of Artaxerxes the great king, on the first day of Nisan, Mardochaeus the son of Jairus, the son of Semeius, the son of Cisaeus, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Jew dwelling in the city Susa, a great man, serving in the king's palace, saw a vision. Now he was of the captivity which Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon had carried captive from Jerusalem, with Jechonias the king of Judea.

And this was his dream: Behold, voices and a noise, thunders and earthquake, tumult upon the earth. And, behold, two great serpents came forth, both ready for conflict, and there came from them a great voice, and by their voice every nation was prepared for battle, even to fight against the nation of the just. And, behold, a day of darkness and blackness, tribulation and anguish, affliction and great tumult upon the earth. And all the righteous nation was troubled, fearing their own afflictions; and they prepared to die, and cried to God: and from their cry there came as it were a great river from a little fountain, even much water. And light and the sun arose, and the lowly were exalted, and devoured the honorable.

And Mardochaeus who had seen this vision and what God designed to do, having awoke, kept it in his heart, and desired by all means to interpret it, even till night. And Mardochaeus rested quiet in the palace with Gabatha and Tharrha the king's two chamberlains, eunuchs who guarded the palace. And he heard their reasonings and searched out their plans, and learnt that they were preparing to lay hands on

king Artaxerxes: and he informed the king concerning them. And the king examined the two chamberlains, and they confessed, and were executed. And the king wrote these things for a memorial; also Mardochaeus wrote concerning these matters. And the king commanded Mardochaeus to attend in the palace, and gave him gifts for this service. And Aman the son of Amadathes the Bugaean was honorable in the sight of the king, and he endeavored to hurt Mardochaeus and his people, because of the two chamberlains of the king.]

I. After these things, in the days of Artaxerxes the same who
2 reigned from India, over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces,
3 when Artaxerxes was settled on his throne in the city Susoi, in the
third year of his reign, he made an entertainment for his friends, both
4 for other nations, and for the nobles of the Persians and Medes, and
5 the governors. And having after this displayed to them the
riches of his kingdom, and the transporting glory of his riches, for a
6 hundred and eighty days; when the days of his marriage were ful-
filled, the king made an entertainment for all the nations who were
6 in the city for six days, in the court of the royal palace, which was
adorned with painted hangings of cotton, extended with cords of
cotton and purple yarn, to capitals of gold and silver, on pillars of
7 parian marble and alabaster. The couches were of gold and silver,
on a pavement of smaragdine, pinine, and parian stone; and their
covers were of gauze, painted with a variety of flowers, and roses
were scattered all around. The goblets of gold and silver, with a
small carbuncled cup to each, amounted in value to thirty thousand
talents. There was wine in abundance, and of a sweet quality, such as
8 the king himself drank. Now this entertainment was not according
to an established custom; but the king would have it so, and he com-
manded the stewards to comply with his pleasure, and that of the
9 guests. Astin the queen also made an entertainment for the women
10 in the royal palace, where king Artaxerxes was. And on the seventh
day, the king, in high good humor, ordered Aman and Bazan and
Tharra and Barazè and Zatholtha and Abataza and Tharaba, the seven
11 chamberlains who waited on king Artaxerxes, to bring the queen to
him to proclaim her queen, and crown her with a diadem, and show
her to the chiefs, and her beauty to the nations; for she was beauti-
12 ful. But queen Astin hearkened not to him to come with the chain-
berlains, at which the king was greatly offended and inflamed with
13 anger, and he said to his friends, Astin hath spoken so and so; do
you therefore execute law and judgment, touching this matter.

11 Thereupon there came before him, Arkesaius and Sarsathaius and
 12 Malisear the chiefs of the Persians and the Medes, who were near
 13 the king, and had the first seats next to him; and told him according
 14 to the laws what ought to be done to queen Astin, because she had
 15 not done what the king commanded by the chamberlains. And
 16 Muchaius said to the king and to the chiefs, Queen Astin hath wronged,
 17 not the king only, but also all the king's chiefs and leaders; for he
 18 hath told them the queen's conduct, and how she hath contradicted
 19 the king. Therefore as she has contradicted the king Artaxerxes, so
 20 will the rest of the ladies now, the wives of the Persian and Medean
 21 princes, upon hearing what she hath said to the king, presume in like
 22 manner to dishonor their husbands. If, therefore, it seemeth good
 to the king, let him pass a royal decree, and let it be written accord-
 23 ing to the laws of the Medes and Persians, and let him not alter it, nor
 24 suffer the queen any more to approach him; but let the king give
 25 her royalty to another woman, better than her.(!) And let this edict
 26 of the king be proclaimed, which if he cause to be done throughout his
 27 kingdom, then will all the women, both rich and poor, pay respect
 28 to their husbands. And the speech pleased the king and the princes;
 29 and the king did as Muchaius had spoken, and sent the decree
 30 throughout the whole kingdom, into every province in the language
 and writing thereof, that men might be feared by their own families.

II. After this when the king's wrath was appeased and he no more remembered Astin, nor made any mention of what she had spoken.
 2 and how he had condemned her; the king's servants said, Let there
 3 be sought for the king a virgin of unblemished chastity, and beauti-
 ful; and let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his king-
 4 dom, and let them select and send to the city Susoi to the house of
 the women, virgins remarkable for beauty; and let them be delivered
 5 to the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women; and let the
 things necessary for purification be given them. And let the woman
 6 who shall please the king be made queen in the room of Astin. And
 the proposal pleased the king, and he did so.

Now there was at the city of Susoi, a man, a Jew, whose name
 2 was Mordcaï. He was the son of Jairus, the son of Seueias, the
 3 son of Kisaius, of the tribe of Benjamin. He had been carried away
 4 captive from Jerusalem among them whom Nabuchodonosor king of
 5 Babylon had captivated. And this man had a foster child, a daughter
 6 of Aminadab, his father's brother; and her name was Esther. On
 the decease of her parents he educated her to be a wife for himself.

8 But as the girl was beautiful, when the decree of the king was published, and many young women were brought to the city Susoi and put under the care of Gai, Esther also was brought to Gai the keeper of the women. And the young woman pleased him and found favor in his sight, so that he hastened to give her the things for purification and the allotted portion; and seven waiting maids were assigned to her out of the king's house; and he treated her and her maids courteously in the house of the women. Now Esther did not disclose her family nor her country; for Mordecai had charged her not to tell. But Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house to see what would happen to Esther.

12 Now the time for every young woman to go to the king was when she had completed twelve months; for thus were the days of their purification fulfilled. Six months they were anointed with oil of myrrh, and six months with aromatics and lotions used by women. 13 Then she goeth in to the king. The keeper is to deliver her to whomsoever the king ordereth to go with her from the women's apartment to the king's house. In the evening she goeth in, and in the morning goeth with all speed to the second house of the women, which is under the care of Gai, the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, and no more cometh to the king unless called for by name. 15 So when the time was fulfilled for Esther the daughter of Aminadab, Mordecai's uncle, to go to the king, she neglected nothing which the chamberlain the keeper of the women ordered her; for Esther found favor with all who saw her. And Esther went in to Artaxerxes the king, in the twelfth month which is the month Adar, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king was enamored of Esther, and she found favor above all the virgins, so that he set the queen's crown on her head and made an entertainment for all his friends and potentates for seven days, and to celebrate the marriage of Esther he made a release to those under his government.

19 Now Mordecai performed service in the court, and Esther had not yet declared her family; for Mordecai having charged her in this manner to fear God and execute his commands as when she was with him, Esther did not alter her conduct. And two of the king's chamberlains, who were captains of his life-guard, being displeased because Mordecai was promoted, sought to kill king Artaxerxes. 22 But the matter being made known to Mordecai, he informed Esther, and she disclosed the conspiracy to the king; whereupon the king having examined the chamberlains, caused them to be hanged, and ordered a record to be made in the royal library with an encomium on Mordecai's fidelity.

III. After these things king Artaxerxes honored Haman of Amadathus the Bougaian, and promoted him, and seated him first of all his friends, so that all the court bowed down to him, for so the king had commanded to be done. But Mordecai did not bow down to him; whereupon they who were in the king's court said to him, Mordecai, why transgressest thou the king's command. And when they spoke to him daily and he hearkened not to them, they told Haman that Mordecai disobeyed the king's commands. Now Mordecai had told them that he was a Jew. So when Haman understood that Mordecai did not bow down to him, he was greatly inflamed with wrath, and determined to destroy all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Artaxerxes. And having drawn up a decree in the twelfth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, he cast lots for one day after another and for one month after another so as to destroy the whole race of Mordecai in one day. And the lot having fallen on the fourteenth day of the month Adar, he spoke to king Artaxerxes, saying, There is a nation scattered among the nations throughout thy whole kingdom, whose laws differ from all the nations. And as they disobey the king's laws and it is not expedient for the king to let them alone; if it seemeth good to the king, let him pass a decree to destroy them, and I will subscribe ten thousand talents of silver to the king's treasury. Thereupon the king taking off his ring gave it to Haman to seal the writings against the Jews. And the king said to Haman, Keep the money, and do with the nation what thou pleasest. So the king's secretaries were convened on the thirteenth day of the first month, and they wrote as Haman directed to the generals and the governors in every province, from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, and to the chiefs of the nations, according to their dialect, in the name of King Artaxerxes, and the decree was despatched by posts throughout the whole kingdom of Artaxerxes, to destroy the race of the Jews on a certain day of the twelfth month which is Adar, and to make spoil of their goods.

[And the following is the copy of the letter: The great king Artaxerxes writes thus to the rulers and inferior governors of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India even to Ethiopia, who hold authority under *him*. Ruling over many nations, and having obtained dominion over the whole world, I was minded (not elated by the confidence of power, but ever conducting *myself* with great moderation and with gentleness), to make the lives of *my* subjects continually tranquil, desiring both to maintain the kingdom quiet and orderly to *its*

utmost limits, and to restore the peace desired by all men. But when I had enquired of my counsellors how this should be brought to pass, Aman, who excels in soundness of judgment among us, and has been manifestly well inclined without wavering and with unshaken fidelity, and has obtained the second post in the kingdom, informed us that a certain ill-disposed people is mixed up with all the tribes throughout the world, opposed in their laws to every other nation, and continually neglecting the commands of the kings, so that the united government blamelessly administered by us is not quietly established. Having then conceived that this nation alone of all others is continually set in opposition to every man, introducing as a change a foreign code of laws, and injuriously plotting to accomplish the worst of evils against our interests, and against the happy establishment of the monarchy; we have accordingly appointed those who are signified to you in the letters written by Aman, who is set over the public affairs and is our second governor, to destroy them all utterly with their wives and children by the swords of the enemies, without pitying or sparing any, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month Adar, of the present year; that the people aforetime and now ill-disposed to us, having been violently consigned to death in one day, may hereafter secure to us continually a well constituted and quiet state of affairs.]

11 And copies of the decree were to be sent throughout every province,
15 and all the nations were ordered to be ready against that day. And
when the business was despatched at Susoi, the king and Haman sat
down to revel, but the city was struck with consternation.

IV. Now when Mordecai knew what was done, he rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and strewed himself with ashes, and running through the streets of the city, he cried with a loud voice, A nation 2 is to be cut off, which hath committed no fault. But when he came to the king's gate, he stopped; for it was not lawful for him to enter 3 the court in sackcloth and ashes. And in every country where the writings were published there was a cry with lamentation and great 4 grief among the Jews, and they put on sackcloth and ashes. When the queen's maids and chamberlains came in and told her, she was troubled at the news, and sent to clothe Mordecai and to take away 5 his sackcloth from him; but he would not be persuaded. Then Esther called Achrathaius her chamberlain, who attended her, and sent him to learn from Mordecai an exact state of the matter. 7 Whereupon Mordecai told him what was done, and the promise which Haman had made to the king of ten thousand talents to the royal

8 treasury, that he might destroy the Jews ; and he gave him a copy
of the decree for their destruction which was published among the
Susians to show it to Esther, and told him that he charged her to go
in and supplicate the king and to entreat him for the people, calling
to mind the days of thy humiliation when thou wast brought up by
my bounty. Seeing Haman who is second to the king, hath spoken
against us to destroy us, call thou upon the Lord and speak to the
9 king for us, to deliver us from death. Accordingly, Achrathaius
10 went in and told her all these words. Thereupon Esther said to
him, Go to Mordecai, and tell him, that all the nations of the king-
11 dom know, that no man or woman who shall go to the king into the
inner court without being sent for hath any security for life ; he
only can be saved to whom the king shall stretch forth the golden
sceptre. Now I have not been called to go to the king these thirty
12 days. When Achrathaius delivered this message of Esther to Mor-
13 decai, Mordecai said to him, Go say to her, Esther, do not flatter
thyself that thou alone of all the Jews in the kingdom shall escape.
14 Be assured, that if thou neglectest the present opportunity, help and
protection will come to the Jews from some other quarter ; but thou
and thy father's house shall be destroyed. Who knoweth but for
15 this very occasion thou hast been made queen. (?) Then Esther
16 sent back the messenger to Mordecai, saying, Go and assemble the
Jews who are at Susoi and fast for me. You must neither eat nor
drink for three days, night nor day ; and as for me, I and my maids
will fast likewise, and then I will go to the king contrary to law,
though perhaps I must die.

17 So Mordecai went and did as Esther commanded him.

[And he besought the Lord, making mention of all the works of the Lord ; and he said, Lord God, King ruling over all, for all things are in thy power, and there is n^o one that shall oppose thee in thy purpose to save Israel. For thou hast made the heaven and the earth, and every wonderful thing in the *world* under heaven. And thou art Lord of all, and there is no one who shall resist thee the Lord. Thou knowest all things : thou knowest, Lord, that it is not in insolence, nor haughtiness, nor love of glory that I have done this, to refuse obeisance to the haughty Aman. For I would gladly have kissed the soles of his feet for the safety of Israel. But I have done this, that I might not set the glory of man above the glory of God : and I will not worship any one except thee, my Lord, and I will not do these things in haughtiness. And now, O Lord God, the King, the God

of Abraam, spare thy people, for *our enemies* are looking upon us to *our destruction*, and they have desired to destroy thine ancient inheritance. Do not overlook thy peculiar people, whom thou hast redeemed for thyself out of the land of Egypt. Hearken to my prayer, and be propitious to thine inheritance, and turn our mourning into gladness, that we may live and sing praise to thy name, O Lord ; and do not utterly destroy the mouth of them that praise thee, O Lord.

And all Israel cried with *all* their might, for their death *was* before their eyes. And queen Esther betook herself for refuge to the Lord, being taken *as it were* in the agony of death. And having taken off her glorious apparel, she put on garments of distress and mourning; and instead of grand perfumes she filled her head with ashes and dung, and she greatly brought down her body, and she filled every place of her glad adorning with the *torn* curls of her hair.

And she besought the Lord God of Israel, and said, O my Lord, thou alone art our king ; help me *who am* destitute, and have no helper but thee, for my danger *is* near at hand. I have heard from my birth, in the tribe of my kindred, that thou, Lord, tookest Israel out of all the nations, and our fathers out of all their kindred for a perpetual inheritance, and hast wrought for them all that thou hast said. And now we have sinned before thee, and thou hast delivered us into the hands of our enemies, because we honored their gods ; thou art righteous, O Lord. But now they have not been contented with the bitterness of our slavery, but have laid their hands on the hands of their idols, *in order* to abolish the decree of thy mouth, and utterly to destroy thine inheritance, and to stop the mouth of them that praise thee, and to extinguish the glory of thine house and thine altar, and to open the mouth of the Gentiles to *speak* the praises of vanities, and in order that a mortal king should be admired for ever.

O Lord, do not resign thy sceptre to them that are not, and let them not laugh at our fall, but turn their counsel against themselves, and make an example of him who has begun to *injure* us. Remember *us*, O Lord, manifest thyself in the time of our affliction, and encourage me, O King of gods, and Ruler of all dominion. Put harmonious speech into my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate him that fights against us, to the utter destruction of him and of them that consent with him. But deliver us by thine hand, and help me *who am* destitute, and have none but thee, O Lord. Thou knowest all things, and knowest that I hate the glory of transgressors, and that I abhor the couch of the uncircumcised, and of every stranger. Thou knowest

my necessity, for I abhor the symbol of my proud station, which is upon my head in the days of my splendor ; I abhor it as a monstrous cloth, and I wear it not in the days of my tranquility. And thy handmaid has not eaten *at* the table of Aman, and I have not honored the banquet of the king, neither have I drunk wine of libations. Neither has thy handmaid rejoiced since the day of my promotion until now, except in thee, O Lord God of Abraam. O God, who hast power over all, hearken to the voice of the desperate, and deliver us from the hand of them that devise mischief ; and deliver me from my fear.

And it came to pass on the third day, when she had ceased praying, that she put off her mean dress, and put on her glorious apparel. And being splendidly arrayed, and having called upon God the Overseer and Preserver of all things, she took her two maids, and she leaned upon one, as a delicate female, and the other followed bearing her train. And she *was* blooming in the perfection of her beauty ; and her face *was* cheerful, as *it were* benevolent, but her heart *was* straitened for fear. And having passed through all the doors, she stood before the king : and he was sitting upon his royal throne, and he had put on all his glorious apparel, *covered* all over with gold and precious stones, and was very terrible. And having raised his face resplendent with glory, he looked with intense anger : and the queen fell, and changed her color as she fainted ; and she bowed herself upon the head of the maid that went before *her*. But God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and in intense feeling he sprang from off his throne, and took her into his arms, until she recovered : and he comforted her with peaceable words, and said to her, What is *the matter, Esther?* I am thy brother ; be of good cheer, thou shalt not die, for our command is openly declared *to thee*, Draw nigh.

And having raised the golden sceptre he laid it upon her neck, and embraced her, and said, Speak to me. And she said to him, I saw thee, *my lord*, as an angel of God, and my heart was troubled for fear of thy glory ; for thou, *my lord*, art to be wondered at, and thy face is full of grace. And while she was speaking, she fainted and fell. Then the king was troubled, and all his servants comforted her.]

V. And on the third day Esther put on her royal apparel and stood in the inner court of the king's palace over against the king's house, when the king was sitting on his royal throne, in the royal

2 house, over against the gate. And when the king saw Esther standing in the court, she obtained favor in his sight, and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre which was in his hand, and Esther
3 drew near and touched the top of the sceptre. And the king said,
What would queen Esther? And what is thy petition? To the
4 half of my kingdom it shall be granted thee. Thereupon Esther said, To-day is my set day; if, therefore, it seemeth good to the king, let him come with Haman to the banquet which I will this day
5 prepare. And the king said, Call Haman quickly that we may do
6 as Esther hath said. So they both went to the banquet which Esther had ordered. And at the banquet the king said to Esther,
7 What would queen Esther? Whatever thou askest shall be granted.
8 To which she replied, If I have found favor in the sight of the king, let the king come again with Haman to-morrow to the banquet which I will prepare for them, and to-morrow I will make my
9 request and my petition. Then Haman went out from the king overjoyed and gladdened; but upon seeing Mordecai the Jew in the
10 court, he was inflamed with great indignation. So going home, he
11 called his friends and his wife Zosara, and having displayed to them his riches and the honor which the king had conferred on him; how he had promoted him to the highest rank and made him ruler of the kingdom,
12 the queen, said he, invited none to the banquet with the king, but only
13 me: and to-morrow I am invited; but these things give me no pleasure,
14 when I see Mordecai the Jew in the court. Thereupon Zosara his wife and his friends said to him, Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made for thee, and early in the morning speak to the king and let Mordecai be hanged thereon, then go to the banquet with the king and take thy fill of joy. And the thing pleased Haman. So the gallows was got ready.

VI. Now on that night the Lord removed sleep from the king, therefore he ordered his attendants to bring the book of daily records,
2 and read to him; and finding what was written concerning Mordecai, how he had informed the king of the king's two chamberlains, when they commanded the guard, and sought to lay hands on Artaxerxes,
3 the king said, What honor or favor did we confer on Mordecai? To
4 which the king's servants replied, Thou hast conferred none. And while the king was making inquiry concerning Mordecai's fidelity behold Haman was in the court. And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman had come to speak to the king, that he might order Mordecai to be hanged on the gallows which he had prepared.
5 So the king's servants said, Behold Haman is standing in the court,

6 and the king said, Call him in. And the king said to Haman, What shall I do to the man whom I wish to honor? Upon this Haman 7 said to himself, Whom doth the king wish to honor but me? So he said to the king, With regard to the man whom the king wisheth to 8 honor, let the king's servants bring out the royal robes with which 9 the king is arrayed, and the horse on which the king rideth, and give them to one of the most honorable of the king's friends, and let him array the man whom the king loveth and mount him on the horse, and make proclamation through the street of the city saying, Thus 10 shall it be done to every man whom the king honoreth. Then the king said to Haman, Thou hast spoken well. Do thou so to Mordecai the Jew, who is an attendant in the court. Let nothing be omitted 11 of what thou hast spoken. So Haman took the robe and the horse, and having arrayed Mordecai he mounted him on the horse, and went through the street of the city and made proclamation, saying, Thus shall it be done to every man whom the king wisheth 12 to honor. Then Mordecai returned to the court, and Haman 13 went home in grief with his head covered. And when Haman told his wife and his friends all that had happened to him; his friends and his wife said, If Mordecai be of the race of the Jews thy humiliation before him is begun. Thou shalt continue falling, and shalt not be able to have thy revenge of him; for with 14 him is the living God. And while they were speaking the chamberlains came to hasten Haman to the banquet which Esther had prepared.

VII. And when the king came with Haman to the banquet with the 2 queen, the king said to Esther the second day at the banquet, What is it queen Esther? What is thy request, and what thy petition? to 3 the half of my kingdom it shall be granted thee. Thereupon she in reply said, If I have found favor in the sight of the king, let my life be granted at my request, and my people at my petition; for I 4 and my people are sold to be destroyed. Had it been to be plundered and reduced to slavery — that we and our children should be bondmen and bondwomen, I would have dissembled hearing it, for 5 the accuser is not worthy of the king's court. And the king said, Who is he who hath dared to do such a thing? To which Esther 6 replied, The adversary is Haman, this bad man. At this Haman was struck with consternation for fear of the king and the queen. 7 Then the king rising from the banquet went into the garden, and Haman supplicated the queen, for he saw himself in a desperate

8 situation. And on the king's returning out of the garden as Haman had prostrated himself on the sopha to supplicate the queen, the king said, What ! would he offer violence to my wife in my house ? Upon 9 hearing this Haman was confounded. Then Bugathan one of the chamberlains said to the king, Behold Haman hath prepared a gallows for Mordecai who spoke for the king. There is at Haman's house a gallows actually erected fifty cubits high. Thereupon the 10 king said, Let him be hanged thereon. So Haman was hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the king's anger was appeased.

VIII. And on that same day the king made a present to Esther of all that belonged to Haman the accuser. And the king sent for 2 Mordecai (for Esther told him that he was her kinsman) ; and the king took the ring which he had taken back from Haman and gave it to Mordecai, and Esther set him over all that belonged to Haman. 3 Then she spoke to the king again and fell at his feet and besought him to avert the mischief of Haman, and what he had devised against 4 the Jews. And when the king stretched forth the golden sceptre to 5 Esther, she arose and stood near the king and said, If it seemeth good to thee, and I have found favor, let despatches be sent to reverse the letters sent by Haman, which were written to destroy the 6 Jews who are in thy kingdom. For how can I see the calamity of my people ? or how can I survive the destruction of my kindred ? 7 Thereupon the king said to Esther, If I have given thee all the substance of Haman, and to gratify thee have caused him to be hanged on a gallows, because he laid his hands on the Jews, what more dost 8 thou desire ? Write ye yourselves what you please in my name, and seal it with my ring. For what is written by the king's order, and sealed with my ring cannot be reversed.

9 So the secretaries were convened in the first month which is Nisan, on the three and twentieth day thereof in the same year, and a letter was written to the Jews reciting all that had been given in charge to the lieutenants and to the chief governors of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, 10 to every province as they could read it, then it was written by the king's command and sealed with his ring (and these letters were sent 11 by posts), that he ordered them to use their own laws in every city, 12 and to assist each other, and to use their adversaries and them who assaulted them as they pleased, on a certain day, the thirteenth of the twelfth month Adar, throughout the whole kingdom of Artaxerxes,—

[(v. 13, etc.). And the following is the copy of the letter of the orders.

The great king Artaxerxes sends greeting to the rulers of provinces in a hundred and twenty-seven satrapies, from India to Ethiopia, even to those who are faithful to our interests. Many who have been frequently honoured by the most abundant kindness of their benefactors have conceived ambitious designs, and not only endeavor to hurt our subjects, but moreover, not being able to bear prosperity, they also endeavor to plot against their own benefactors. And they not only would utterly abolish gratitude from among men, but also, elated by the boastings of men who are strangers to all that is good, they suppose that they shall escape the sin-hating vengeance of the ever-seeing God. And oftentimes *evil* exhortation has made partakers of the guilt of shedding innocent blood, and has involved in irremediable calamities, many of those who were appointed to offices of authority, who had been entrusted with the management of their friends' affairs; while *men* by the false sophistry of an evil disposition, have deceived the simple candor of the ruling powers. And it is possible to see *this*, not so much from more ancient traditional accounts, as it is immediately in your power *to see it* by examining what things have been wickedly perpetrated by the baseness of men unworthily holding power. And *it is right* to take heed with regard to the future, that we may maintain the government in undisturbed peace for all men, adopting *needful* changes, and ever judging those cases which come under *our* notice, with truly equitable decision.

For whereas Aman, a Macedonian, the son of Amadathes, in reality an alien from the blood of the Persians, and differing widely from our mild course of government, having been hospitably entertained by us, obtained so large a share of our universal kindness as to be called our father, and to continue the person next to the royal throne, reverenced of all; *he, however*, overcome by the pride of his station, endeavored to deprive us of our dominion, and our life; having by various and subtle artifices demanded for destruction both Mardochaeus our deliverer and perpetual benefactor, and Esther the blameless consort of *our* kingdom, with their whole nation. For by these methods he thought, having surprised us in a defenceless state, to transfer the dominion of the Persians to the Macedonians. But we find that the Jews who have been consigned to destruction by the most abominable of men, are not malefactors, but living according to the justest laws, and being the sons of the living God, the most high and mighty, who maintains the kingdom, to us as well as to our forefathers, in the most excellent order.

Ye will therefore do well in refusing to obey the letters sent by Aman the son of Amadathes, because he that has done these things has been hanged with his whole family at the gates of Susa, Almighty God having swiftly returned to him a worthy recompense. *We enjoin you* then, having openly published a copy of this letter in every place, to give the Jews permission to use their own lawful customs, and to strengthen them, that on the thirteenth of the twelfth month Adar, on the self-same day, they may defend themselves against those who attacked them in the time of affliction. For in the place of the destruction of the chosen race, Almighty God has granted them this *time of gladness*.

Do ye therefore also, among your *notable feasts*, keep a distinct day with all festivity, that both now and hereafter it may be a day of deliverance to us and those who are well disposed toward the Persians, but to those that plotted against us a memorial of destruction. And every city and province collectively, which shall not do accordingly, shall be consumed with vengeance by spear and fire; it shall be made not only inaccessible to men, but also most hateful to wild beasts and birds forever.]

13 that these subsequent writings were to counterbalance the former letter; and that these counterbalancing writings should be exposed to public view throughout the whole kingdom, that the Jews might 14 be ready against that day to combat their adversaries. So the horse-15 men set out in all haste to execute the king's orders. And when the decree was published at Susoi, Mordecai went forth, arrayed in a royal robe, wearing a crown of gold and a turban of purple 16 cotton. And upon seeing him the inhabitants of Susoi rejoiced. 17 And among the Jews, there was light and joy in every city and province where the decree was published. Wherever proclamation was made, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, feasting and mirth; so that many of the nations were circumcised and became Jews, for fear of the Jews.

IX. For in the twelfth month, on the thirteenth of the month Adar, the letters of the king having arrived, they who assaulted the Jews on that day were destroyed. For none withstood them, and terror of them continued; for the great lords and petty princes and the king's secretaries honored the Jews; for the dread of Mordecai fell upon them; for the decree of the king had caused his name to be known throughout the whole kingdom.

6 Now in the city Susoi, the Jews slew five hundred men, including Pharsanes and Delphon, and Phasga and Pharadatha, and Barea and Sarbaka, and Marmasima and Ruphaias, and Arsaius and Zabuthias, the ten sons of Haman of Amadathu the Bugaian, the enemy 11 of the Jews ; and rifled them. On that very day, when a return was made to the king of the number slain at Susoi, the king said to 12 Esther, The Jews have slain in the city Susoi five hundred men, how then, thinkest thou, have they behaved in the rest of the kingdom ?

What therefore dost thou request farther, and it shall be granted 13 thee ? Thereupon Esther said to the king, Let the Jews be allowed to use to-morrow in like manner, that they may hang up the ten sons 14 of Haman. Accordingly he granted them leave to do so, and ordered the bodies of the ten sons of Haman to be thrown out to the Jews to 15 be hanged up. So the Jews at Susoi assembled on the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men, but took no spoil.

16 Now the rest of the Jews who were in the kingdom assembled and assisted each other, and had rest from their enemies, for they slew fifteen thousand of them on the thirteenth of the month Adar, 17 but took no spoil. And having rested on the fourteenth of the month, they kept it as a day of rest, with joy and gladness. 18 But the Jews of Susoi having assembled on the fourteenth and then 19 rested, kept the fifteenth with joy and gladness. Therefore because the Jews, who were scattered through all the distant provinces, keep the fourteenth of the month Adar, as a holy day, with joy, sending portions to one another, Mordecai wrote an account of these matters in a book, and sent it to all the Jews who were in the kingdom of Artaxerxes far and near, to set apart as holy days and to keep both the fourteenth and the fifteenth of the month Adar, for in 22 those days the Jews had rest from their enemies : And with regard to the month Adar, in which they had a change from grief to joy, and from sorrow to gladness, to keep the whole month as good days of weddings and joy, sending portions to their friends and to the poor. And 24 the Jews took this upon them. As Mordecai wrote to them how Haman of Amadathu, the Macedonian, warred against them — as 25 he made calculations and cast lots to destroy them, and as he went to the king with an intention to hang Mordecai, but all the evils he endeavored to bring on the Jews, fell upon himself, and he and his 26 sons were hanged ; therefore these days were called Phrouri, because of the lots, which in their language are called Phrouri. On the account of the things contained in that letter, and of all that they

21 suffered in consequence thereof, and all that happened to them, as he instituted, so the Jews took upon themselves and their posterity, and upon all that joined them, never to use them in any other manner. Therefore let these days be a lasting memorial from generation to generation, in every city, country, and province ; and let these days of Phrouri be kept forever ; and let the memorial of them never perish from among their generations.

22 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Aminadab, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote all that they did, and a confirmation of the letter 23 respecting the Phrouri, which Mordecai and Esther the queen enjoined on themselves, to their own prejudice, having at that time established their counsel against their health. Thus did Esther actually establish it, and it was written to be kept in remembrance.

X. Then the king laid a tribute upon the dominion, both of the 2 land and the sea. But with regard to his power and his valour and the riches and the glory of his kingdom, behold they are written in the book of the kings of the Persians and the Medes to be kept in 3 remembrance. Now Mordecai was viceroy of king Artaxerxes, and was great in the kingdom, and being honoured by the Jews and beloved, he enforced the observance of their religion on all his nation.

[And Mardochaeus said, These things have been done of God. For I remember the dream which I had concerning these matters ; for not one particular of them has failed. *There was* the little fountain, which became a river, and there was light, and the sun, and much water. The river is Esther, whom the king married, and made queen. And the two serpents are I and Aman. And the nations are those *nations* that combined to destroy the name of the Jews. But *as for* my nation, this is Israel, *even* they that cried to God, and were delivered ; for the Lord delivered his people, and the Lord rescued us out of all these calamities ; and God wrought such signs and great wonders as have not been done among the nations. Therefore did he ordain two lots, one for the people of God, and one for all the *other* nations. And these two lots came for an appointed season, and for a day of judgment, before God, and for all the nations. And God remembered his people, and vindicated his inheritance. And they shall observe these days, in the month Adar, on the fourteenth and on the fifteenth *day* of the month, with an assembly, and joy and gladness before God, throughout the generations for ever among his people Israel.

In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said that he was a priest and a Levite, and Ptolemy his son brought in the published letter of Phrurae, which they said existed, and which Lysimachus the son of Ptolemy, who was in Jerusalem, had interpreted].

HEBREW INDEX

PAGE.		PAGE	
אָגָר	120	פָּר	113, 114, 116
אָגָר	120, 121	כִּיְוִישׁ	92
אַקְרָא	94, 120	דָּרוֹר	114
אַרְבָּה	94, 120	קָרָר	113, 114, 116
אַזְוֵב	71	שָׂתָה	34
אַחֲשֶׁרְבָּרוֹן	94	חַבְרִית	29
אַחֲשְׁרִים	52, 75	חוֹזֶה	29
אַחֲשְׁרִיָּה	92	קִלְמָט	47
אַחֲשְׁרִיךְ	94	הַכְּרִיר	109
אַחֲשְׁרִיךְ	94, 156	עַמְּלָאָה	7
אַרְכָּה	74	חַלְלָה	45, 109
אַרְטָה	66	חַסְפָּר	89
אַל	137	חַזְוּכּוֹת	88
אַלְלָלִים	133	חַשְׁלָנוֹן	109
אַלְמָנִים	104	נוֹרָדָה	29
אַנוֹן	40	נוֹעַקְהָסֶט	88
אַפְּרִי	88	וְאַ	88
אַרְאָדוֹן	32	נוֹרִי	91
אַרְתָּה	92	חַנְרָ	32
אַרְתָּהָסְתָּה	92	חַנְרָ	32
אַרְתָּהָשְׁבָּה	86	חַוָּר	32
אָ		חַזְרָ	31
אַרְץָ	137	חַשְׁבָּ	73
אַתְּ	78	חַבָּג	72
בְּאֵץ	32	חַקְ	129
בְּחֻמֶּת	112, 116	חַצְרָ	145
בְּרִיר	76	חַשְׁבָּ	72
בְּרִיתָה	97, 98	חַבָּג	145
בְּרִיתָה	31, 104	חַבְּגָגָת	72
בְּרִיתָה	31	חַבְּגָגָת	41, 51
בְּרִילָתָה	38	טוֹבָ	41
בְּרִלָּל	86, 94	יְשָׁבָה	123, 129
בְּרוֹן	94	יְקָנָעָ	37
בְּרוֹת	31	יְקָרָ	37
בָּרָ	120	יְמָרָ	123, 128, 129
בָּרָה	70	קָבָרָ	51
בָּרָה	41	כָּלָ	137
בָּרָהָרִי	47, 88	קָרְבָּא	48
בָּרָהָרִי	41	קָרְפָּט	32, 93
בָּרָהָרִי	78	קָמָבָ	120

	PAGE.		PAGE.
קַחְבָּ	120	עַל בָּנָ	86
קַחְרָ	34, 93, 94	מִרְכָּבָ	34
לְבָנָה	112	עַזְבָּ	47, 122, 123, 127, 128
לְךָ	91	פֶּתַחָ	75, 76
לְחַלְוָתָ	128	פְּתַחְזָרָ	53, 75
מְגֻלָּתָ	7	פָּרָאָרָ	93
פְּרִיְהָ	29	פְּרִיבָּסָ	31
בְּרִינְחָאָ	158	פְּרִיסָּ	93
בְּרִוְיָהָ	109	פְּרִיסָּתָ	93
מְוֹצָרָ	137	פְּרִתָּאָרָ	93
מְוֹצָרָ	137	פְּרִתָּאָטָ	94, 121
מִיָּ	66	פְּרִתָּאָרָ	104, 108
פְּשָׁטָ	156	פְּרִשְׁׂׂנָןָ	94
פְּסָחָהָ	156	צִבְּרָ	71
פְּסָבָּהָ	120	קְבָּלָ	85
פְּטָ�	41	קְוִינְיָ	88
סְסָ	156	רָאָטָ	60
סְסָ	89, 156, 157	רְבִּינְגְּנִיןָ	109
סְפָהָ	156	רְכָבָ	156
סְסָסָ	156	רֵגָןָ	77, 121
סְעָדָרָ	130	רְצָסָ	77, 155
סְעָדָהָ	34	רְצָפָהָ	110
סְעָדָרָזָיָ	38	שְׁבָטָ	73, 152
סְעָדָתָהָ	19	שְׁאָלָ	94
סְעָדָהָלָ	42	שְׁיָקָנָ	111
סְעָדָהָסָ	139	שְׁזָפָןָ	29
סְעָנָרָ	38	שְׁבָחָהָ	48
סְעָנָהָ	84	שְׁדָרָ	114
סְעָנָהָנָ	121	שְׁלָדוֹתָ	91
סְעָנָהָטָ	156	שְׁלָטָנוֹ	158
סְעָרָ	114, 116	שְׁסָוָ	40
סְעָרָהָ	114, 116	שְׁפָגָ	81
סְעָרָתָ	114, 116	שְׁפָרָןָ	10
סְעָרָתָ	46	שְׁרָבָרָטָ	152
סְעָרָתָ	119, 120, 121	שְׁפָרָזָ	45, 109
סְעָרָתָ	75	שְׁפָטָ	32, 111, 112, 116
סְעָרָתָ	84	שְׁרָמָטָ	76
סְעָרָתָ	38	שְׁרָיָ	76
סְעָרָתָ	48, 49	שְׁלָאָ	123, 128, 129
סְעָרָתָ	49	שְׁלָתָ	47, 123, 128, 129
סְעָרָתָ	34	שְׁלָגָ	45, 109

ENGLISH INDEX.

Ahasuerus, identity of,	9, 10	Bonomi quoted,	109, 158, 159
Alabaster,	114, 115, 116	Book of chronicles,	90
Alphabets, Persian and Hebrew, compared,	10, 11, 92, 93, 94	Book of records; see "Daily affairs, book of."	
Akhasverosh,	11, 16, 17, 92	Boyle, R., quoted,	163
Anonymous writings,	166	Brick,	111, 112, 113
Arnold quoted,	119	Brutus and Cassius,	161
Artabanus, advice,	20	Buildings, arrangement of; see "Topography and Buildings."	
Artakbshaslite,	92	Bull, the Pope's,	143
Artaxerxes Longimanus:		Calvin quoted,	151
character,	14	Cambyses, character,	157
not Ahasuerus,	14	not Ahasuerus,	11, 12
Artaxerxes Ochus,	12	Castle, Shushan the,	29, 30
inscription by,	12	Windsor,	98
Attire, maidens',	43	Chaparing,	119
Auguries and Omens,	50	Chehl Minar,	97, 99, 100, 196
Awnings, colors of,	32	Concealment, the Divine,	164
materials,	32	the Saviour's,	164, 165
not hangings,	31, 32	Couches,	33
Babylon, palace of,	98	Counsellors,	35, 36
Bahat,	112, 113	Couriers, Grecian,	155
Ballantine quoted,	119	Jewish,	155
Banquet,	30, 31, 44, 61, 68	origin,	155
Basalt,	115	Roman,	155
Bayith, the,	99, 101, 102	swiftness,	155
Beecher, Prof. W. J., quoted,	37	use,	76, 77, 117, 155
Benefactors, royal, rewarded,	65	Couriers,	156
Berah, the,	30, 97, 98, 108	Court, of the garden,	31
Berthlein quoted,	31, 89	inner,	57, 59, 103, 104, 105
Bethan, the,	99, 101, 102	mode of access,	105, 106, 108
Bible, authors of,	167	outer,	58, 65, 66, 107
variety of,	166	Cross, original character,	123
Blue, a royal color,	113		189

Crown,	34, 35, 44, 66, 78	Esther, Queen, beauty of, winning, 60
Crucifixion, among Romans,	124	courage, 59
Cuneiform alphabet,	92, 93	edict of, 89
Cuneiform writing,	10, 75	endowments, 74
Cursive writing,	75, 121	fast of, 59
Curtius quoted,	48	fear of, 57
Daily affairs, book of,	47, 64, 89, 90	genealogy, 18, 40, 41
Daniel, Tomb of,	111	grief of, 56
Dar,	113, 114, 116	indignation, 69
Darius Hystaspis, character,	157	modesty, 43, 44
history,	12, 13	name of, 40
Daryvush,	92	nationality hidden, 41, 42
Davidson, Dr. S., quoted,	15	not revengeful, 83
Days, lucky and unlucky,	50	obedience, 46
Divine name omitted,	161	perseverance, 73
by design,	165	piety, degree of, 161
Drinking vessels,	33	Eunuchs, character of, 34
Ebers quoted,	68	treachery of, 46
Esther, Book of:		Ewald, quoted, 131, 132, 133
addressed to race,	168	Execution, early modes of, 47, 63, 122
anonymous,	166	Exodus of Israelites, 166
author,	21, 24, 162, 163	Ezra, Book of, 161
author's qualifications,	23, 24	Fame, 81
chronology of,	9, 17	Fasting, act of piety, 149
contributions to history,	18	among Christians, 151
date of,	9	intention, 150
design,	163, 165	nature, 150
divine attributes in,	165	of Jews, 150, 151
divine name absent,	163, 165	prayer in itself, 59, 149, 150
estimation by Jews,	7, 8	Fasting and crying, 87, 88, 89
excerpt from records,	162	Favorites, royal, fate of:
geography of,	21	in English history, 154
instructive,	169	in French history, 154
non-Jewish character,	162	in Grecian history, 153
not poetry nor parable,	8	in Jewish history, 153, 154
omissions of,	162	in Persian history, 153
outline of,	25, 26, 27	in Roman history, 154
practical teaching,	9	Fear, province of, 79
Providence of God in,	8, 163	Felton, Prof. C. C., quoted, 151
Septuagint version of,	170	Fergusson quoted, 109
apocryphal additions to,	170,	Gate of the king, 45, 46, 102, 103,
174, 176, 182, 185		107, 108, 109
true to life,	8, 9	Gesenius quoted, 156
Esther, Queen, attendants,	56	Gibbon quoted, 155
banquet,	44	God, attributes visible, 165, 166

God, concealments,	164	Homage, Oriental,	48
hidden in nature,	163	Horses, swift,	156
perceptible in objects,	165	House of women; see "Women, house of."	
presence unseen,	168		
present in blessings,	169		
present in trials,	169		
response to man,	161		
Godliness profitable,	91	Impalement,	26, 27, 47, 63, 70, 71;
"Good," range of term,	41, 51	83, 86, 125, 127, 129, 130	
Grief, Oriental expression of,	55	Impressment,	118, 119, 121
Greece, deliverance of,	20	Inscriptions,	11, 97
Gury, J. P. quoted,	143	Israelites, exodus of,	166
Haggadah,	139		
Halachah,	189	Jamieson, Dr., quoted,	152
Hall, Prof. I. H., quoted,	61	Jesus, concealments of,	164, 165
Haman, ambition of,	67	silence of,	164
character,	47	Jews, change of fortune,	80, 81
descent,	47, 48	contentment of,	130, 131
disappointment,	63, 67	deportations of,	40
downfall,	71	dispersion of,	51, 130
exaltation,	47	enterprise of,	132
family of,	63	fasts of,	150, 151
grief of,	67	fidelity of,	132
house, ruin of,	71, 72	forbearance of,	54, 82
machination,	73	in exile,	130
malice of,	62, 71	influence of,	133
offer of money,	51, 56	invincible,	80
self-restraint,	62	loyalty of,	51
sons of,	63, 81, 83	mission of,	132, 133
superstition,	50	moral progress of,	135
terror of,	70	number of,	17, 160
vengeance,	49	obedience to Mordecai,	85
versatility,	66	patriotism of,	130, 131
Hanging, as impalement,	47, 122,	property confiscated,	52
128, 129, 130		separation of,	132
instances of,	128, 129	solidarity of,	86, 88
Hangings or curtains,	31, 108	testimony of, for God,	133, 135
Harbonah, suggestion of,	70	waning piety of,	162
Harem, the Oriental,	102, 105, 106	weaned from idolatry,	133, 134
the royal,	9, 45		
Hatach, character of,	57	Keil quoted,	89, 160
Hebrew, derivation of term,	49	Khshyarsha,	10, 11, 12, 16, 92
Hebrew, modern use,	139	Khorsabad, inscriptions at,	158
Herodotus, quotations from,	15, 19,	King, gate of; see "Gate of the king."	
48, 125, 155, 157, 158		King's Gate and the Courts,	102
Historiographers, royal,	64	Language, change of,	138
		Languages, diversity of,	37, 38
		Leonidas, impalement of,	125

Persian kings, ignorance of,	72	Revenue, sources of,	160
postal system,	53, 117, 118	Rivers, crown property,	160
postal system for royal use,	118	Royal favorites ; see "Favorites, royal."	
post-routes,	119	Runners,	77, 117
post-routes in modern times,	119	Sackcloth and ashes,	55, 56
records, in poetic form,	163	Salt-works,	160
rivers, the king's,	160	Sandstone, red,	115
Words and Names,	93	Satraps, extortion of,	160
writing,	75	grandeur of,	159
Persians, cruelty of,	54	number of,	53, 157
inebriety of,	33, 68	office of,	53, 75, 159
monotheism of,	134	power arbitrary,	159, 160
Piety, low state of,	161	support of,	159, 160
Pillars, material of,	32	Se sceptre, character of,	151
Pin or peg,	125, 126, 128, 129	Assyrian,	152, 153
Plato quoted,	155	Egyptian,	151
Polygamy, evils of,	37, 45	golden, the,	57, 60, 73, 106, 151
Pope's bull,	143	Grecian,	152
Posts,	76	Jewish,	152, 153
Post-houses,	118	Persian,	152
Postal system ; see "Persian postal system."		Se sceptre-bearers,	60
Princes,	76	Schultz quoted,	23, 89
Prodigal Son, parable of,	168	Scribes, Jewish,	75
Prometheus, fate of,	126	royal,	52, 75
Promises, Oriental,	61	Scripture, silencer of,	163, 164
Property, crown,	160	Seals ; see "Signet rings."	
Propylon,	46, 102, 103, 109	Self-defence,	77, 80, 81, 83
Proscenae,	137	Septuagint Esther, translation of,	170
Providience of God,	50, 80	translator,	170
Power, delegated,	76	apocryphal additions,	170, 174,
irresponsible,	78	176, 182, 185	
military,	80	Serpentine,	112
Purim, feast,	7, 20, 84, 85, 86, 87	Shash, limestone,	111
letters of,	87	Shushan, climate of,	96
Quarries, crown property,	160	fertility of,	96
Queen Esther ; see "Esther, Queen."		great hall of,	96, 100, 102
Raleigh, Dr. A., quoted,	57, 60	importance of,	95
Rawlinson, Canon, quoted,	39, 53, 64,	joy in,	78
65, 74, 75, 93, 125, 158, 160		mounds of,	96, 97
Relief,	58	perplexity of,	55
Request, Oriental mode of,	61	population of,	81
Rest,	44, 84	site of,	95
Retribution,	86	Shushan the castle,	29, 98, 99
Revenue, farmed out,	160	Signet-rings and Seals,	72, 76, 140, 141
		Assyrian,	145

Signet-rings, Babylonian,	145	Tribute, repugnance to,	159
Chaldean,	145, 146	sources of,	89
cost,	143	Trywhitt, quoted,	12
Egyptian,	144, 145		
Hebrew,	145	Ulai or Eulaeus,	95
kinds of,	141		
materials,	141	Van Lenep quoted,	140, 148
Persian,	52	Vashti, deposition of,	37, 38
Roman;	143	disobedience of,	35
use,	140, 143	power of,	38
Signet, royal ; see "Signet-rings and Seals."		position at court,	34
Silence, of Bible,	164	Victims, number of,	81, 83, 84
instructive,	163	Virgins, gatherings of,	39, 41, 45
of Jesus,	164		
Sochereth,	114	Water-tax, Persian,	160
Stalagmite,	114	Wine, royal,	33
Stake,	123, 124	Wise men,	35
Strabo quoted,	100	Woman's power,	37
Strangling,	129	right,	35
Sublime Porte,	45		
Susa ; see "Shushan."		Women, house of,	39, 105, 106
Synagogue, early origin of,	130, 137	ointments for,	42, 43
the Great,	138	Wordsworth, Bishop, quoted,	81
Synagogues, destruction of,	137	Writing, materials for,	121
in Jerusalem,	137		
in Rome,	137		
Syro-Chaldaic,	139		
Talents, amount of,	51	Xerxes, attendants of,	38
Targums,	139	brutality of,	54
Temple, loss of,	135	character of,	15, 54
of Onias,	136	empire, extent of ; see "Persian empire, extent of."	
Topography and Buildings,	95	excitement of,	69, 70
Tree, for impalement,	63	expedition against Greece,	19,
uses of term,	127, 128, 129		30, 44
Trench, Archbishop, quoted,	163	feast, purpose of,	19
Tribute, amount of,	157, 158	fickleness and caprice,	68
derivation of term,	89, 156	fright,	20
kinds of,	156, 159	greatness,	89, 90
levied by Darius,	157	gyneceum,	39, 43
mode of paying,	158, 159	haste,	54, 78
paid by Jews,	156	identity with Ahasuerus,	15, 29
Persia exempt from,	160	inscriptions naming,	11, 12
		sleeplessness,	64
Zeresh, advice of,			
prediction by,			
Zerubbabel,			

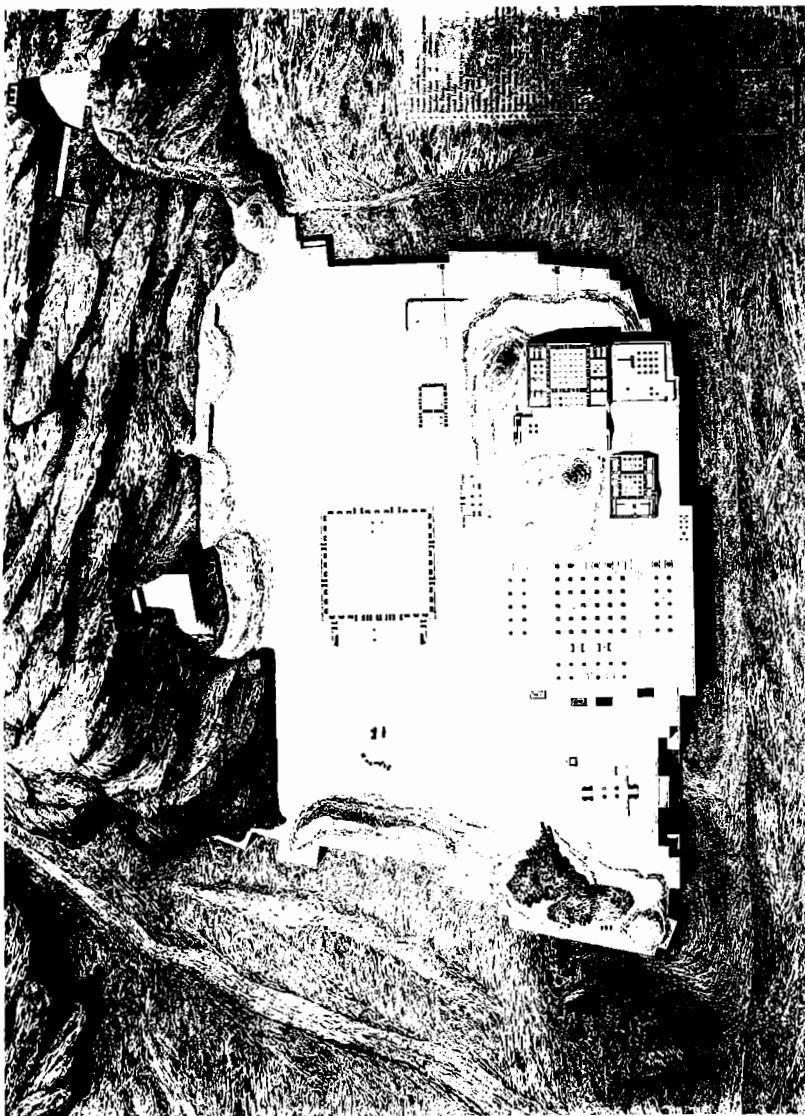
THE PLATFORM AT PERSEPOLIS.

REDUCED FROM FLANDIN AND COSTE.

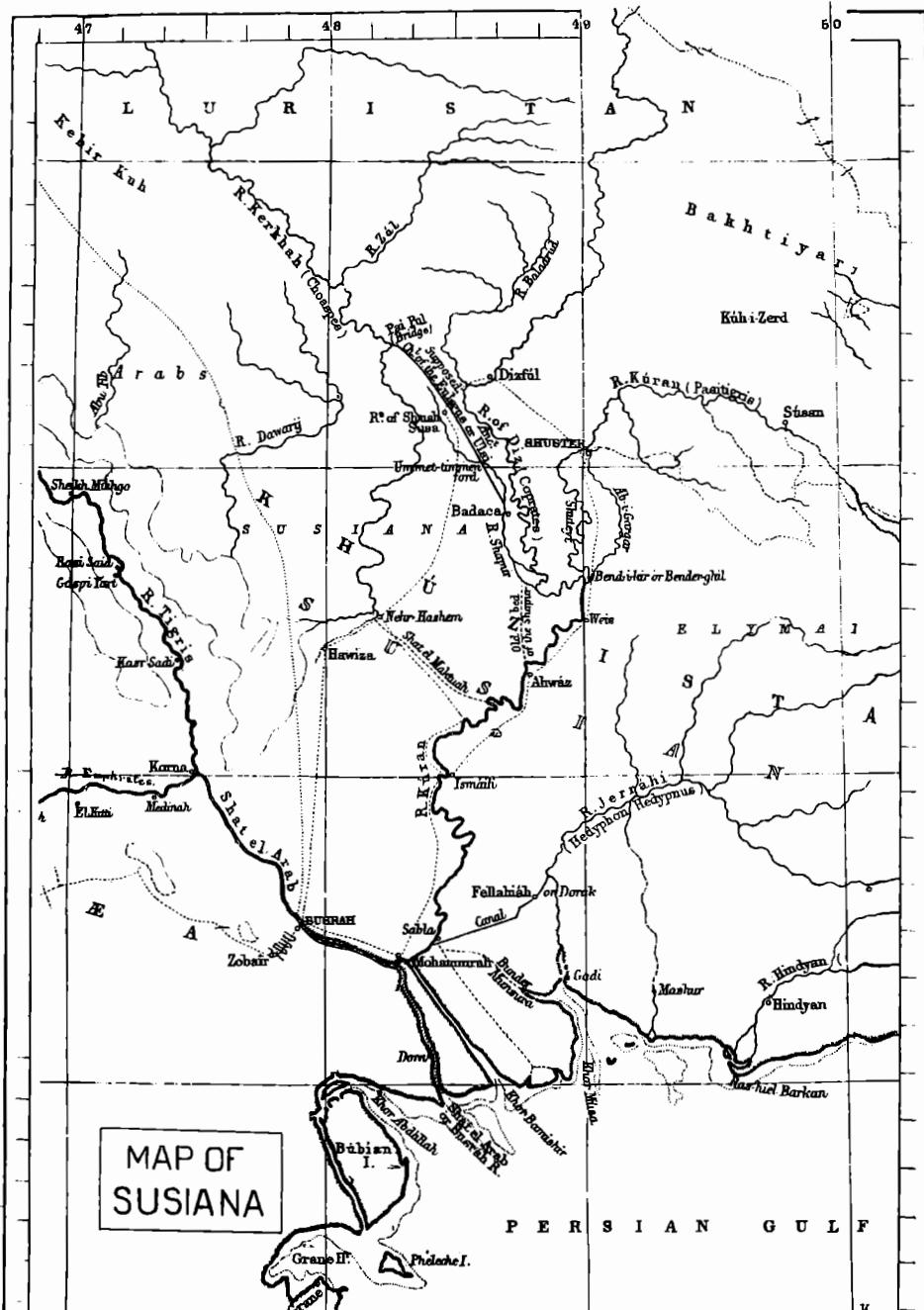
Explanation of general features.

1. The stairs on the left (west) lead from the plain to the Northern Terrace, first upon which is the Propylon of Xerxes, then, far to the right, the Eastern Propylon.
2. Returning to the left, a sculptured staircase leads to the higher Central Terrace, first upon which is the famous Hall of Xerxes (Chehl Minar); beyond this the Hall of a Hundred Columns; in the hill are excavations, perhaps for tombs.
3. Next, to the south, and in order from the left, are a cluster of nameless ruins upon the edge, the Palace of Darius, a mound of rubbish, the Central Edifice (or Propylon).
4. The last range of ruins begins, at the left, with the Southwest Edifice, followed by the Palace of Xerxes upon a higher level, fronted near one corner by a small Propylon at the head of stairs; a mound of rubbish follows, beyond which is the Southeast Edifice.
5. Directly in the rear of the Palace of Xerxes the level drops to the Southern Terrace, upon which are no discoverable ruins.

The details may be better seen with a magnifying glass, and are more fully explained in Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, (Dodd, Mead, and Co's ed.), Vol. iii. pp. 270-312.







— Plan of the —
most remarkable
MOUNDS OF SHUSH

— (ANCIENT SUBA) —
with the *Tomb of the Prophet Daniel*

FROM LOFTUS.

